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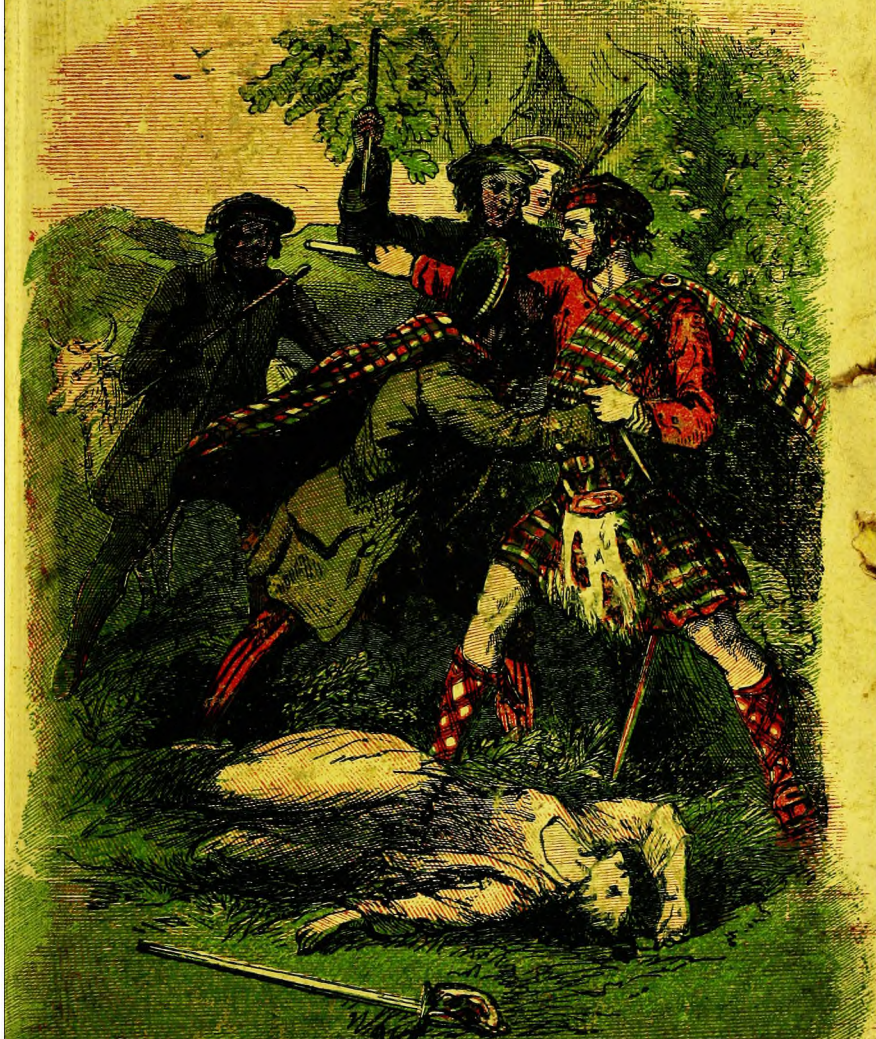
THE

PHANTOM REGIMENT

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR"



LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS



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BALTIMORE

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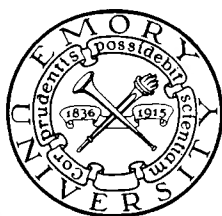
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THE PHANTOM REGIMENT;

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CHAPTER I.

THE ROMANCE OF A MONTH.

‘Adios, Señora Paulina—adios, mi Señora Dominga.”

“Adios, Señor Don Ricardo,” replied a sweet voice from the depths of the old Spanish coach.

“Vaya usted con Dios, y que no haya novedad Señoras,” said I, making a vigorous effort with my best Castilian; and with these words, and one bright parting glance from two black Andalusian eyes, so ended my little romance of a month, as the old-fashioned coach, which was doubtless the production of some cunning workman of Seville or Jaen, rolled slowly, pompously, and heavily away towards the Spanish lines, from the north gate of Gibraltar.

And this farewell took place exactly this day twelve months ago.

The coach which bore away the old lady who rejoiced in the euphonious cognomen of Donna Dominga de Lucena y Colmenar de Orieja, and her daughter the pretty Paulina, was a genuine old Castilian contrivance of the true caravan species; and, though still in use, in this our age of luxury and invention, had been constructed, perhaps, before folding steps were conceived; for a three-legged stool, to facilitate ingress and egress, hung near the door.

The roof was shaped like the crust of an apple-pie, and the lower carriage, like that portion of a triumphal car. It was drawn by a pair of fat sleek mules, which seemed to have grown old with the vehicle, and with Pedrillo, the little postilion, who floundered away on a demi-pique saddle, with a gigantic cocked hat surmounting his dark visage; and his lean spindle legs lost in two gigantic jack-boots, which belonged to the beforesaid saddle rather than to his own person.

Such was the antediluvian vehicle which bore away the pompous old Donna and her daughter the charming Paulina, who, for the past month (during which she had resided in Gibraltar), had turned all the heads of "Ours;" and was boasted by the Spaniards as the fairest belle in las Cuatros Reinos—yes in the three mighty little kingdoms of Seville, Cordova, Jaen, and Granada, which are now conglomerated into the beautiful province of Andalusia.

And so, without other escort than the redoubtable Pedrillo, who wore a trabujo or blunderbuss slung across his back, and strong in their belief in the virtues of the Santa Faz of Jaen, a picture of which was hung in the back of their coach, these two Spanish ladies, on the conclusion of their visit, departed on their return to Seville, their native city; and from the British fortifications, which frown in solid tiers towards the Spanish lines, I watched the venerable carrozzo as it rolled across the low sandy Isthmus, which is known as the neutral ground; and it disappeared just as the sun began to fade upon the beautiful masses of the Serrania de Rondo, which rose in piles against the golden clouds, and as the evening gun pealed like thunder among the Moorish peaks of Jebel Tarik; and then I turned away with a sigh as I thought of the winning smile I should never see again.

"It's all over now, Ramble," said my friend Jack Slingsby, who was the subaltern of my company, and who had been my chum at Sandhurst; "it is all

over, Dick," he continued, with a laugh and one of those rough slaps on the shoulder, which no one ventures to give but an Englishman; "and so, instead of airing your sorrows here, 'sighing to the evening breeze' and all that sort of thing, you may as well come with me and knock the balls about a little—or join Shafton, the colonel, and some of "Ours" who have proposed a pool to-night—and meanwhile solace yourself with another of my 'very superior' cabanas."

"Perhaps it is as well she is gone, Jack," said I, endeavouring to imitate his light-hearted indifference; "had she remained among us another week, I would certainly have booked for her, and so have bedevilled myself, as you said yesterday."

"For Donna Paulina?"

"Of course—had you any doubts as to which?"

"Why—no. I certainly did not think that you were in love with the mother."

"Well," said I, impatiently.

"Paulina is very beautiful, no doubt; she has those Andalusian eyes and ankles which all the world talk about, but which all the world must see to feel the full effect of either. She has a charming manner—a glorious 'espièglerie'—yes, that's the word! full of pretty repartee, and all that sort of thing—you understand me, Dick, or Don Ricardo, as she called you; but withal, I assure you, I should not like to enter for a Spanish wife, of all women in the world; no, no—what does the song say?" and as we reascended to the higher parts of the fortress, this careless fellow sang aloud a scrap of a popular mess-table song, somewhat to this purpose:—

"No fair fräulein or demoiselle, nor donna with her smile,
Shall ever teach me to forget the dear ones of our isle;
And when I seek a heart and hand among the fair and free,
Still constant in my faith, I'll say an English girl for me."

"That is the mark, Dick,—

"—— an English girl for me!"

Besides, half of the young fellows in garrison here ran after Paulina; and at every mess-table she was as well known as the big drum, or the regimental snuff-box, or that great ram's head with its devilish horns, with which those highland fellows of the 92nd decorate their table, after the cloth is removed. At every ball, field-day, and tertulia—at church, and on the promenade, a crowd of admirers surrounded her, like flies round honey, and she seemed to be equally delighted with all."

"That was one of the peculiar charms of her manner, Jack," said I.

"Peculiar, indeed!" said he, letting out a cloud of smoke from his well-mustachioed lip.

"In public, she distinguished none in particular, but was alike gay with all."

"And in private, who was said generally to be the happy Lothario?"

I made no reply, but knocked the ashes away from the 'very superior' cabana, with which he had just favoured me.

"It was said to be a certain person known as Dick Ramble of 'Ours,'" continued Slingsby, in his bantering way; "but I am deuced glad it is all over, like any other flirtation, and you are 'free to win and free to wed another;' I don't like Spaniards—and never shall. In fact, I have hated them ever since that unpleasant adventure I had at Malaga last year, and about which I shall tell you some other time; but here come Shafton, Morton, and some more of 'Ours,' and as soon as we leave the mess, we shall adjourn to the billiard table."

What this 'unpleasant adventure,' to which Slingsby referred—and to which I had often heard him refer before—might have been I cared not then to inquire; but walked on, more chilled than consoled by his rattling manner and by that mess-room raillery, which I have known to laugh many a wiser man than your humble servant, out of an honest and sincere

passion; while it has also been the saving of many an inflammable "Newcome," or unfledged, but amatory ensign, from the lures of those passé garrison belles, whose feathers are beginning to moult, and whose brilliance is beginning to fade, after a long career of close flirtation, round-dancing, supper-crushes, cold fowl, ices, pink champagne, affectionate farewells in the grey morning, when the drowsy drum-boys beat reveillie, or when the route arrived, and each lover—a lover alas! but for the time—departed with his regiment to return no more.

Of Paulina de Lucena (such a pretty name it is!) I had seen much during her short residence in Gibraltar, and had become—what shall I term it, for 'Ours' were not marrying men—charmed by her sweetness of temper and piquant manner, as well as by her acknowledged beauty.

Jack Slingsby stigmatised this under the denomination of "being spooney;" but as I have a proper abhorrence of all that slang phraseology which is peculiar to the university, the barrack, the clubhouse, and the turf, I believe I shall quote honest Jack no more, but proceed in my own fashion.

She was the only daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Don Ignacio de Lucena, a Knight of San Fernando, an officer of Lancers in the service of the Queen of Spain, in one of whose battles he was taken prisoner by Cabrera, and shot in cold blood with fifty of his soldiers; for this ferocious Carlist behaved with such barbarity to the Constitutional Army that one of its officers, who had been a prisoner, assured me that at Valencia he and his comrades were subjected to such cruelty by their captors, that after a thousand sufferings, on being denied food, they were driven to the dreadful necessity of devouring the body of a fellow captive.*

The profession of her father, together with the circumstance of one of her brothers being in the

* A work published in Valencia positively asserts this.

Spanish sea service, and another in the army of Portugal, caused her to view with a favourable eye all who have the honour to live by the sword; and my small smattering of Spanish, which I picked up in those idle hours of a garrison life that otherwise must have hung heavily over me, gave me every facility for cultivating a friendship which had in it everything that might serve to dazzle and charm a young man; for with the idea of Andalusia and Spanish beauty we are apt to conjure up so much of love and of romance that the imagination gets the better of the senses; besides, those rogues of travellers and romancers have always given us such exaggerated pictures of Spanish loveliness.

In regularity of feature and fairness of complexion, Donna Paulina was inferior to many a pretty girl I have seen at home. Her most glorious attractions were her dark glossy tresses and her black eloquent eyes—brilliant, sad, subduing, ever varying, but ever black, and under their long, long fringes, ever melting. In beauty of form and grace of movement she was unmatched out of her own province, and I can assure the reader that the first time her very striking figure appeared among the promenaders in the Alameda of Gibraltar with her drapery of black lace falling from a high pearl comb, her mantilla, her close-fitting dress, her pretty feet in their Cordovan slippers, and her large fan, the unhappy bones of which were ever in a state of flutter and excitement, and between which she shot her most dangerous glances, it occasioned much marvel, curiosity, and speculation at all the mess-tables of Her Majesty's forces stationed on the rock.

To such a companion imagine the charm of acting cicerone about the fortifications of old Gibraltar; imagine our evening rambles round Rosia Bay and along the new mole, where the ships of the British and Yankees, the French, Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Turks, Greeks, Moors, Arabs, and Jews,

with all their varieties of ensigns, costume and rig, are riding at anchor, and where many a grim mortar and cannon gun frown over the new bastion; imagine the transition from the sunny Alameda to the deep cool galleries which are hewn in the heart of the living rock, and which are now turned to such war-like purposes as old Pomponius Mela, who first wrote of them, could never have conceived, and where we wandered for many an hour, the pretty donna forgetting the starched customs of her country so far as to grasp my arm with both her hands at times, for the aspect of these places filled her with timidity and awe.

To these subterranean batteries there is admitted but a dim and dubious light that steals through their embrasures, glinting on the damp slime of their walls and roof of rock; and on the heavy ordnance—sixty-eight pounders some of them—which stand on frames of metal, on piles of balls and bombs, and on doors studded with iron, that lead to other and inner vaults full of missiles and unknown terrors.

On, on would we wander, through grim batteries, gloomy magazines, and far-stretching galleries, that seemed to be without end, obtaining at times through the vaulted embrasures a glimpse of the town, then basking in the glare of the noonday sun, or of the sea, shining under a brilliance in which the vessels on its bosom became lost, while we heard only the sound of our own voices, the twang of a bugle, or the sharp rat-tat of a drum in the barracks, the faint boom of a breaker on the cliffs, or the fainter sound of voices in the town, far, far down below, where all the races of the world were mingling; for there, in its streets, might be seen the smart Greek in his scarlet fez and ample kilt; the hideous Afric Jew in his black and white striped cowl; the slow and solemn Turk; the bare-kneed Scottish soldier; the lively Italian sailor, and the puffing, perspiring, and grumbling John Bull.

I saw Paulina daily, and garrison life became one long and enchanting dream!

In the batteries of the rock we promenaded often when the heat became too great in the sunny Alameda, and with such a companion, while wandering through the subterranean and twilight shades of Saint George's Hall, or the Windsor Gallery, how was it possible to escape from loving her.—A coquettish Andalusian, who, whenever I ventured to become a little more tender than usual, would tap me over the fingers with her fan, or give me one brilliant, flashing and fascinating glance, as she closed her screen of black lace, and threatened to leave me, while she sang, with the most charming grace in the world, "Pues por besarte Minguillo," the English of which is somewhat to the following purpose:—

"Give me swiftly back, thou dear one,
Give the kiss I gave to you;
Give me back the kiss, for mother
Is impatient—prithce do!
Give me that, and take another,
For that one, thou shalt have two."

And where, the while, the reader may naturally enquire, was the cautious, suspicious, and lynx-eyed Spanish mother therein referred to?

Now old Donna Dominga had conceived a vehement friendship for me since the first evening on which I had the pleasure of meeting her at the residence of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief; and where I supplied her with ices when she was warm, adjusted her mantilla when she was cool, held her fan, snuff-box, and poodle, and brought her a cigarillo and orange-water dashed with the smallest taste of brandy; and, discovering her sympathies and antipathies, soon learned to anathematise Cabrera and the Conde de Montmolín, to express a vague belief in miracles in general, and the verity of the Holy Face of Jaén in particular. I "turned" the

old lady's flank, and established myself safely under the wing of her prejudices.

She always accompanied Paulina and me in our rambles; but I generally contrived, by a little successful manœuvring, to leave her to the care of Dr. MacLeechy, our senior surgeon, after Jack Slingsby had very disobligingly revolted against this duty; and as the doctor and the Donna were either somewhat pursy, or disposed to prose and linger, we usually left them far in the rear and lost sight of them altogether.

Now the doctor, who quoted Kelaart as if he had been his own father, and expatiated to the old lady on geology (with mineralogy, botany, and Scottish metaphysics), was so very particular in explaining the leaves, fibres, and various properties of the *Iberus Giberaltarica*, the only plant peculiar to the rock, that the stout Donna Dominga, who deemed all this but the language of the flowers, and viewed everything through the medium of gallantry, became troubled in spirit, and would occasionally blush behind the sticks of her fan, or ogle and look unutterable things at our poor unconscious medico. She would sigh tenderly when he plucked the soft palmetto which grows in the rocky crevices, or tremble over the white polyanthus, and was ready to drop like a ripe pumpkin into his arms, when he grew eloquent upon the various species of the cacti.

This was all very well while it lasted, for while the ponderous old donna thought that our quiet, canny, and discreet Galen, who signed himself M.D. of St. Andrews, and F.R.C.S. of Edinburgh, was a lover of her own, she forgot to look too narrowly after us; and believed that she had found a most agreeable mode of passing the month in Gibraltar, which, for change of air, had been recommended by some sangrado of Seville, as her health had become somewhat impaired by ease and good living.

I was so dazzled and delighted with the charming

Paulina, and her pretty little ways, that I had really begun to prepare my mind for repelling the banter of the mess, and for waiting with due solemnity upon Donna Dominga to confer with her alone, upon settlements and so forth, when a terrible denouement took place! Having rashly boasted of her imaginary conquest over our doctor, to a lady whom she met at the house of a rich Spanish merchant in the Alameda, there ensued between them an immediate scene; for this unlucky communication (given with all the coy triumph with which the plump old lady could invest it) was made to no other than the doctor's wife, who had just arrived from Dublin; and as it had never entered the head of Donna Dominga to inquire whether our unsuspecting medico was a Benedick—bond or free, as they say in Australia—a storm was the consequence.

Now, Mrs. Leechy MacLeechy, our Scotch doctor's better half, was a strong-minded Irish woman, who wore a species of turban, and was the terror of the regiment; on each of her fat wrists she wore a bracelet of blood-encrusted medals, torn, as she said, "off Rooshian breasts," and sent to her from Sebastopol by her brother, who was "the matchor—the saynior matchor—devil a less, or the foighting eighty-ayth;" and so this lady, in her deep Galway patois, poured on the Spaniard a broadside that would have sunk the Santissima Trinidad.

Finding her love affair at an end, the cruel donna resolved to cut short mine. Within an hour after this meeting, Pedrillo was summoned; the old Spanish coach was brought forth; the baggage packed, and her farewell cards—P.P.C.—dispatched to the governor and his military secretary; to the aides-de-camp and staff colonel; to the officers commanding regiments, and all the great folks of the place. The old lady and the pretty Paulina got into the depths of the ponderous 'carrozza;' the three-legged stool was strapped to the door; Pedrillo clambered into

his bucket-like boots, and muttered many 'carajos!' as he applied his latigo to the sleek sides of the dapple mules, and while their proprietrix was sulking and fuming at Gibraltar and all the heretics who dwelt therein, the huge conveyance crawled along the narrow causeway which forms the communication between the town and the isthmus, and, for the present, thus ended, as I have said, my pleasant little Spanish romance of a month.

A recollection was all that remained to me of Paulina, and of that flirtation which was fast maturing into something of a better and more lasting nature.

CHAPTER II.

THE GUARDA COSTA.

DURING the two preceding months we had been daily expecting orders to embark for the Crimea, and this expectation formed almost our sole topic at mess; but days became weeks, and weeks became months, yet we heard no more of it than what passed among ourselves.

Transports laden with troops—horse, foot, and artillery—touched daily at the Rock, and steamed on into the bright blue Mediterranean, with spirit-stirring cheers rising from their crowded decks. Regiments junior to ours were withdrawn from the Rock and dispatched to that scene of bravery and bloodshed, of mismanagement and disaster, towards which all our thoughts, our hopes, and hearts were turned; but the route never came for “Ours,” and we grew decidedly peevish, and found the dull routine of duty among the endless batteries, bastions, curtains, magazines, and casemates of that mighty fortress which was so long boasted (before the days of steam) as the key of “the great French lake,” sufficiently tedious; for we felt that we were merely playing at soldiers like militiamen, while our comrades of the line were engaged in desperate work, and played the great game of war, with the eyes of all the world upon them.

One evening, about a week after the departure of the ladies, I was captain of the guard at the New Mole Fort, and Jack Slingsby was my subaltern. We had just finished the dinner which had been sent to us, hot and smoking, from the mess-house,

in a conveyance for the purpose; the windows of the officers' guardroom were open, and with a box of contraband cigars, a few periodicals from the garrison library, a telescope to watch the passing ships, and a bottle or two of very choice mess claret, we were dozing the sunny evening of Andalusia very comfortably away.

The last dispatches from the Crimea had been read and discussed by us; the last lists of killed, wounded, frozen, or missing in the trenches had been conned over for some familiar name, which brought vividly before us some fine fellow we should never see again; but whose sudden fate was the more interesting to us, because it soon might be our own.

Whether it was the result of the good dinner, the good wine, the sultry atmosphere, or our own thoughts that oppressed us, I know not; but we sat long silent, and gazing at the varied scenery and glittering waters of the bay.

My thoughts were still wandering after Paulina, and I was endeavouring to imagine what she might be about at that precise moment.

Slingsby had lost a very heavy and very absurd bet, on an interesting race run at Grand Cairo between an Irish mare and an Arab horse belonging to Halim Pasha, when the former beat the latter "all to nothing," as Jack phrased it, and he had to hand over 500*l.* to Morton, our colonel, for booking on a horse which neither of them had ever seen. The same race was offered for the last two years against all England, for ten thousand sovereigns, and, as all the sporting world know, the challenge was not accepted. Blue-devilled by his loss, Jack Slingsby sipped his claret in silence and made wise resolutions which he never intended to keep, with moral reflections which he never could practise, and longed for the Crimea, insensible to the charms of this delightful climate, where, even in January, the

narcissus-polyanthus hang in white clusters from the rocks; where the purple lavender flowers in large beds and parterres; where the palmetto spreads its fan-like foliage to the sun; where the gigantic aloe puts forth its leaves, and the prickly pear expands its ponderous bunches, while the wild tulip and the damascus-tree are in full blossom under the gloom of the solemn pine, or the lighter foliage of the cork-tree—and where all is verdure, fragrance, and joy! Yet, amid all this, Jack Slingsby, like the rest of “Ours,” sighed for the frozen camp, the battered trenches, and the misery of Sebastopol.

“So you have not got the better of your Spanish fancies, eh?” said he, for lack of something better to talk about; “the charming Paulina — that most rotund of elderly females, her mamma, and all that sort of thing?”

“What leads you to think so?” I asked languidly, as I lay stretched at length on the windsor chairs, watching the smoke which ascended from my lips to the ceiling.

“It is quite plain, dear Don Ricardo.”

“You cannot mimic her, so don’t attempt it, Jack; but how is it plain, eh?”

“As clear as when the right is in front, the left is the pivot.”

“A technical reply.”

“Dick Ramble, my boy, you are quite sad about her, and there is no use in attempting to conceal it,” continued Slingsby.

“Not sad, exactly,” said I, making an effort to look brave; “never was I fool enough to be sad about any woman yet; there are as good fish, &c., and as for the Spanish girl—try another Cuba, the box is beside you.”

“Thanks—about this Spanish girl?”

“Fill your glass, and push across the decanter; has not that bottle been a little corked, think you?”

"Perhaps—about this Spanish girl?" continued Jack doggedly.

"Well, what the deuce about her?"

"You were just on the point of remarking something."

"Only that her eyes were very fine, were they not?"

"Very, but I prefer blue—

"'No fair fräulein nor dem——'

"For heaven's sake, Jack, don't begin that everlasting ditty!" said I, pettishly; "yes, Paulina's eyes were beautiful; they seemed, as the Spaniards say, to be in mourning for the murders they committed."

"A stale compliment," was Jack's retort to my interruption of a song with which he had favoured the mess every night since we left Southampton, for a small amount of vocal talent will go a long way to charm a mess-table; "she murdered you, however, with very little compunction; but to think of the doctor's botanising with the mother being mistaken for love-making—was it not glorious, Dick?"

"I have sometimes thought of a month's leave, just between musters," said I, without joining in Jack's boisterous laugh.

"Leave! for what purpose?"

"A ride into Spain—say, as far as Seville; what do you think of it?"

"Seventy miles or more to help you to continue a flirtation begun in the casemates of Gibraltar. Thank you, Ramble; I would rather hold myself excused. I had a little adventure in Spain once before, and its devilish concomitants quite cured me of all taste for another; though if I had not lost this unlucky 500*l.*, perhaps—"

"Well, why the deuce did you not let Halim Pasha and his nag alone? What did their race matter to you?"

"But lend me the telescope—what is that puff—a gun?"

"It is a smuggler running right for the harbour, pursued by a Spanish guarda costa; bang! there goes another gun from the Don."

"And right through the felucca's sail too!"

"Hollo! they will be within gunshot of us ere long," said I, springing up; "and this will be work for us. Sentry, call the gunner of the guard."

"Gunner of the guard!" reiterated the sentinel, who stood, bayonet in hand, under a sunshade, at the guard-house door.

The solitary artilleryman, who was attached to my guard, appeared in an instant with his sword by his side, and a lintstock in his hand.

"Get ready a gun," said I; "for there is a Spanish guarda costa in pursuit of a smuggler, and we must protect our friend."

"An 18-pounder, or a 24, sir?"

"Oh, give him a twenty-four, and take a file of the guard to assist you."

While the smuggler, with her long sweeps out, and every stitch of canvas crowded on her long and tapering masts and whip-like yards, was straining every nerve to escape from the Spanish cruiser, which plied away with her bow guns, and bore after her close-hauled, and rushing through the shining waves till they seemed to smoke under her, it may be necessary to inform the reader that the manufacture and smuggling of tobacco and cigars at Gibraltar is a never-failing and never-ending source of angry discussion between the Governments of Spain and Britain; for, by the former, tobacco has long been reckoned a royal monopoly. Now, in Gibraltar, almost every second house is a cigar-shop, and more than two thousand men are daily employed in the manufacture of these articles of luxury, without which a Spaniard would be, as some one says, like a steamer without a funnel. Three-fourths of the British exports from Gibraltar to the three United Kingdoms are also smuggled, and to such an extent is the contraband trade carried, that the annual

importation of tobacco into that fortified town, says Mr. Porter, in his "Progress of the Nation," "amounts to from six millions to eight millions of pounds, nearly the whole of which is purchased by smugglers."

The boats of the contrabandistas are generally rigged as feluccas, and painted black; they are built sharp as a pike-head, and carry a heavy brass gun, which, in harbour, is usually concealed under a pile of old boxes and casks, with a tarpaulin thrown over it, while in cases of emergency, various pistols, pikes, and cutlasses, make their appearance in the hands of the brown-visaged, black-bearded, red-sashed, and rather pictorial-looking ruffians, whose chief occupation is to sleep and lounge about their decks by day.

To look out for these lads of the knife and pistol, the Government of Her Most Catholic Majesty maintains a number of fast-sailing revenue craft, called *guarda costas*, commanded by brave and vigilant officers. These are the abhorrence of the contrabandistas, whose operations are greatly facilitated on land by the concurrence of the corrupt Spanish officials; and those *guarda costas*, in their zeal, had, of late, been rash enough to pursue their prey into those waters which are under the jurisdiction of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Gibraltar; and in three instances had boarded them with pistol and cutlass, shot the crews, or driven them overboard, and thereafter cut the feluccas out from under the very guns of Her Britannic Majesty's fortress.

This, however, was not to be tolerated again, and strict orders had been issued that every *guarda costa* who ventured into troubled waters should be fired on. John Bull is consistently absurd and unjust in all things, and, with all his boasted justice, is the most veritable bully in the world—except, perhaps, his thriving son Jonathan; he would no doubt cut his own smugglers out of any port in the world, and

in the same moment would deny the poor Spaniards the right to do the same; for John is a man full of honour and liberality, or a man of neither, just as may suit his own particular purpose for the time; but to return,—

On came the felucca in question, running straight for the anchorage, which was protected by the heavy guns of the New Mole Fort where we were on guard, and the parapet of which was lined by the soldiers, all eager to witness the result of that most exciting of all things, a chase—a struggle between a strong party and a weak one. On came the guarda costa in pursuit, plying her bow-chaser, cleaving asunder the clouds of white smoke which ever and anon it rolled ahead of her, and riding over the waves, then shining in all the rosy brilliance of a Spanish sunset, while astern waved the large ensign with the red and yellow horizontal bars of Castile and Leon.

Suddenly the little felucca ran up British colours; a sharp patter rang over the water, and a wreath of smoke rose from her stern as the devil-may-care contrabandistas gave the cruiser a dose of small arms.

Boom again! The don gave another shot from his brass gun, and this time an angry shout arose from our own vessels in the roadstead, for the ball had crossed the forefoot of a Newcastle collier.

“Ramble, this will never do,” said Slingsby; “that Spanish craft is too near by half—much nearer than our standing orders permit.”

“Now, gunner, is that 24-pounder ready?” said I.

“All ready, sir.”

“Then bang at her.”

We all watched the shot with breathless interest, for to us, the whole affair was merely a race, a game of hazard, like any other. The sullen roar of the 24-pounder shook the solid parapet of the New Mole Fort, and pealed in repeated echoes round all the shore to the extremity of Rosia Bay; and as the

cloud of light smoke curled away from before us, we saw the shot whipping the water far astern of the guarda costa, and a flush of annoyance spread over the honest face of the artilleryman; for, as all our eyes were bent upon his performance, he had been most anxious to excel, and this very anxiety had probably defeated its object.

A muttered exclamation of impatience escaped him.

"Run back the gun," said he to the guard.

Back went the carronade, and home went the sponge, as he set his teeth, and, with hasty determination, proceeded to reload.

"Quick, quick," said I; "for if she hauls her wind, gunner, there will barely be time to give another shot."

"I'll toss you for it, Señor Capitano," said Slingsby; "bet you a bottle of champagne that I will hit the guarda costa."

"Done," said I; "toss for the first fire."

We tossed, and it fell to Jack.

"Take care that you don't hit the felucca."

"Miss the pigeon and hit the crow—eh, Dick?" he said, while, laughing, he applied his eye to the sites on the breech, and proceeded to adjust the screw, to the evident annoyance of the gunner, who, while he could not decline to relinquish his place to an officer, was piqued on being deprived of a chance of retrieving his name as a professional marksman; and now he stood by, with his match lighted, in the earnest hope, doubtless, that Jack Slingsby would send his shot as wide of the mark as possible. Cigar in mouth, Jack glanced coolly—almost carelessly—along the gun, and on covering his object, cried—"fire!"

Again the lintstock fell on the touch-hole; again the gun-shot rolled along the echoing shore, and peeled away to seaward; a large white splinter was seen on the gunwale of the guarda costa; her sails shivered and flapped in the wind, as the ball struck her, and suddenly backing her mainyard, she lay to,

heaving like a wounded seabird, on the long glassy ridges of the ground-swell, ere the burst of applause with which our soldiers greeted Slingsby had died away—for my friend Jack was one of their most favourite officers.

"You did for her, there, sir," said the gunner, approvingly, as he rammed home the sponge.

"Yes, but as you fired when she was much further off, remember that I have the less credit in hitting," replied Jack, as he gave the gunner a crown-piece to console him.

By this time the felucca, with a shout of derision rising from her deck, ran into the harbour, ducking her colours thrice to us in salute, as she passed the New Mole Fort.

I had not been looking for more than a minute through the spy-glass at the guarda costa, when I became assured that some one on board had been wounded severely, either by the shot or its splinters. The crew—all save the man at the wheel—were grouped amidships; many were kneeling on the deck, and, once or twice, clenched hands were fiercely shaken in menace towards the battery; then we saw a man borne carefully aft between several others.

"Some one has evidently been killed or wounded desperately," said I, handing the glass to Slingsby.

"Good Heaven! do you say so?" cried Jack; "well, it would seem so—poor fellow—you know, Ramble, I did not exactly anticipate such a thing—so it is—so it is! There is a man stretched on the deck!" he added, passing the telescope to our soldiers.

"We have only obeyed a standing garrison order," said I; "and the responsibility thereof, if any, does not lie with us, but with those who issued it. Come back to the guard-room, Jack, and my servant shall go to the messman for that bottle of champagne you have won so well."

"Oh! deuce take the champagne, and all that sort of thing," said Jack, looking still at the guarda costa

For a time an evident confusion and indecision seemed to reign among her crew. She lay heaving and tossing, rising and falling on the long and ridgy rollers, with the setting sun glaring full upon her white mainsail, which lay flat to the mast; the light of day soon sank in the west, behind the upper peak of the rocky mountain, from which a myriad rays shot upward and played on the masses of floating cloud; the strait was still bathed in the amber glory of evening, and each glassy billow of the slow groundswell as it rolled away from west to east, rose like a bank of gold from a plain of brilliant blue; and all the amphitheatre of the town, which stretches along the base of the rock, and rises gradually from the shore in the most delightful manner—mingling in picturesque confusion, the lofty and airy Spanish *caza*, with its flat roof, verandah, and sun-shaded windows, the close, compact English house, the solid rampart, and the flimsy wooden storehouse—all were bathed in the warmest tints, and every casement and window flung back the gleams of radiance, as if they had been illuminated by lamps of crimson and gold.

Soon after the departed sun had shed its last ray on the bare scalp of the sugar-loaf, the crew of the *guarda costa*, as a protection probably, hoisted British colours, and crept past us into the harbour, and immediately on dropping her anchor, sent a boat ashore.

We supposed that this visit could only be for the purpose of lodging a complaint against the officer in command at the New Mole Fort—to wit myself, a complaint which we knew would be unavailing: but we were mistaken; for my servant, on returning from the barracks with the bottle of champagne and other &c. requisite to enable Jack and me to pass the night on guard agreeably, brought us the unpleasant information that the shot had carried away both legs of the unfortunate Spanish lieutenant who commanded the *guarda costa*, and that doctor M'Leech of "Ours" had at once gone off to the vessel to succour the

patient, who—poor fellow!—had died under his hands.

This catastrophe proved a great damper to us, and to Jack in particular, for he was one of the best-hearted fellows in the service; so we had more champagne brought from the mess-house, and we talked of the guarda costa and her poor lieutenant almost till the morning gun was fired; and the affair furnished me with a special paragraph for that "column of remarks" in the guard report which seldom contains memoranda of greater importance than a notice of "the cracked pane of glass, handed over by Captain O'Brien of the 88th;" or, "the poker, handed over, broken, by the last guard under Lieutenant Smith, of the Buffs," and so forth.

In the morning we found that the guarda costa had sailed in the night, taking her dead commander with her; and long before the end of the week we had ceased even to speak of the circumstance at mess, and I forgot the affair as the image of Paulina came before me again, and thoughtless Jack Slingsby was as gay as ever.

But I must mention, that on being relieved from guard at the New Mole Fort, I found waiting me, at my quarters, Pedro de Urquija, a well-known contrabandista, and king of the smugglers of Gibraltar, who gave me a profusion of thanks "for saving his little felucca, La Buena Fortuna, from that devil of a guarda costa," saying it was the closest run he had ever experienced in twenty years of arduous smuggling; and he insisted upon my acceptance of several boxes of prime Cubas and some dozen yards of magnificent lace, worked by the nuns of Cadiz and the poor sisters of Santa Theresa at Estrelo, and we parted the best friends in the world: but a heavy rod was in pickle for Jack and me; and the affair was destined to cost us more danger, trouble, and anxiety, than we could ever have calculated on risking.

CHAPTER III.

JACK SLINGSBY.

THE killing of the Spanish lieutenant revived among our diplomatic people the ever-rankling quarrel about the contrabandistas, and the captain-general of Andalusia wrote an angry letter to the governor of Gibraltar, remonstrating with him on the conduct of the officer in charge of the battery at the Mole Fort, in daring to fire upon a Spanish government cruiser, and requesting that the said Don Ricardo Ramble should be given up to the Spanish authorities to be sent to the galleys at Barcelona probably, or to be otherwise disposed of.

This absurd demand, however, the old general commanding waived politely; but the correspondence was prolonged until the military secretary became bored to death on the subject, and lost all patience at the very mention of it. Now as the Queen of Spain designates herself sovereign lady of Gibraltar, and as the alcalde of San Roque, a little town which has sprung up within the last hundred and fifty years, still styles himself in all official documents Alcalde of San Roque and of Gibraltar, and holder of supreme authority therein, the tone assumed by the capitan-general, who was on a visit to Jaen, was pompous, high, and mighty; for no explanation we could give in writing could make the irritable old Castilian hidalgo see that the lieutenant of the guarda costa had been in the wrong.

One evening, on entering the mess-room, I was startled by Colonel Morton acquainting me that by directions just arrived from the Foreign Secretary he

had been requested to send the two officers who were on guard in the new Mole Fort into Spain.

"Without hostage or guarantee—the devil!" said I, shrugging my shoulders; "and to whom?"

"To this obstinate old bore by habit, and boar by nature, the captain-general."

"As prisoners, colonel?" cried Slingsby, with an astounded air from the other end of the table, and pausing with his hand on a wine decanter; "you don't mean to say as prisoners?"

"Prisoners—not at all; how could you think of such a thing?" said the colonel, laughing, for he was a hearty old soldier, at whose name stood P.W. and K.H., and C.B. in *Hart's Army List*; "you go merely to explain the late affair in person; and it is the more necessary for you both to go as the two aides-de-camp of the governor are on the sick list. It is only a ride of some seventy or eighty miles into Spain—wish 't were I who had the duty to do."

"And where does the captain-general live?"

"At Seville, to which place he is now returning from Jaen."

"Ah, indeed, Seville," said I, reviving, as I filled my glass with Moselle, and Slingsby stuck his glass in his remarkably knowing eye.

"You'll take good horses; but be careful of rogues, raterillos, and footpads by the way. I can lend you a pair of pistols with spring bayonets."

"Thank you, colonel, I have my revolver," said I, laughing.

"What! you smile, Ramble?" said the colonel; "and believe me to have the bandittophobia; but I know Spain well, having marched over every foot of the Peninsula under Lord Lyndedoch, and fought my way from the Black Horse Square at Lisbon to the banks of the Nive, so I know pretty well, that in peace as in war armed desperadoes, whose hands are against all men, are, as a certain traveller says, 'the very weeds of the Spanish soil.' Right well do

I know the land of Los Espagnols as we used to call them in the old fighting 5th Hussars. I was in the cavalry then, and had I not grown stiff in the joints, and lost all relish for adventures by day, fleas by night, and the resinous taste of vino out of a skin at all times, I would have saved you the trouble of the journey and gone myself; but my instructions from home say that Captain Ramble and Lieutenant Slingsby must go, so there is the end of it. Major, Mr. Vice, another bottle of wine to drink 'bon voyage' to Ramble and Slingsby."

"With all my heart; sergeant Slopper, a fresh allowance of wine," said the major.

"Wish I were going with you," said Shafton, the captain of our light company; "a ride to Seville! the very name of the place conjures up a sunny vision of orange trees and glowing grapes, of black mantillas and taper ancles, and different duty from trenching in the Crimea as we might have been, and ought to have been by this time."

"Aye," quoth M'Leechy the doctor, who although married (as he knew to his cost) was dining that day with the mess; "and a pleasant change after our dull routine of garrison life, during which we have, as 'Punch' says—

"Contentedly eat ration beefs and muttons,
Contentedly drank ration rums and waters;
Darned our own socks, and sewed our own buttons,
Fried in summer, and froze in winter quarters."

"A fine upon the doctor," said Shafton; "colonel, Mr. Vice, gentlemen, he vilely satirises Her Majesty's service, a bottle of champagne from the doctor."

"You will remember us all most affectionately to Donna Dominga and to the bewitching Paulina—you will see them of course," said some one from the foot of the table.

"The doctor must prepare some of the rarest specimens of those remarkable cacti with which he subdued the heart of the plumo widow," said Slingsby,

taking up the chorus of banter, "and have them ready by to-morrow ; we start to-morrow, I presume, colonel."

"As early as you please," said Morton.

"We shall have some glorious fun in Seville—eh, Ramble? You'll envy us, gentlemen."

"If the captain-general does not garotte you," snarled the doctor ; "or treat you as Don Ramon Cabrera, the Conde de Morella, treated the husband of Donna Dominga."

"But for that gentle sigh, doctor, I would have considered you quite a bear," said Slingsby, "but pass the wine, M'Leechy."

"If you find Seville dull," retorted the doctor, "you had better play the same little prank you played at Kilkenny when you were in the Sixth."

"What did he do when in the Sixth?" inquired a dozen voices at once.

"What did he not do you should ask," continued the doctor, while Jack smiled faintly and filled up his glass. "Once when we marched into Kilkenny we found there had been a quarrel between the Rapparees of the district and the first battalion of Scots Royals. It was in the time of high Repeal enthusiasm, and nothing was thought of but an Irish Republic, so the people looked darkly at the red-coats. Now Slingsby had never been in Ireland before, and as he received over the barrack-guard from one of the Royals, with bayonets fixed and drum beating, he asked how the inhabitants liked the troops.

"'Ill enough,' answered the Royal, 'since we shot some of them in a tithe business near Roscrea: they have been as cold as charity, and the devil a dinner or ball have we had since last muster day, and you be here till you are mouldy without seeing such a thing as a waltz or white kids—ices and fowl, trifle and champagne.'

"Whereupon Mr. Jack Slingsby, being an English-

man, and knowing no better, believed he might play pranks upon the Irish; and seating himself in his quarters next day, he assumed his pen and dispatched the following card to every house in the town:—

“Lieutenant Slingsby, of H. M.’s 6th Foot, presents his compliments to the ladies of Kilkenny, and takes the earliest opportunity of announcing his arrival. He begs to inform them that he can play whist, casino, and every game on cards known in Christendom; that he flirts to admiration, and can polk, waltz, and dance the varsovienné ditto, that generally he can accommodate himself to every whim-wham of the charming sex, and is always to be heard of at his residence in the infantry barracks.’

“Among others he rashly sent one of these precious circulars to Mrs. Towler, the wife—I beg her pardon—the lady of the major-general of the district, who wickedly handed it to her husband at breakfast; so poor Jack’s production brought him before a general court-martial. It went very hard with him, for the irascible general deemed that his wife and her ten highly-eligible daughters were grossly insulted; but our hero escaped with a reprimand, and the colonel was directed to watch his conduct in future, but he became thereafter the lion of Kilkenny and Carlow to boot, and all the district from Roscrea to Clonmel. After that, an evening party without Jack, would have been like a bell without a clapper.”

“But the general never forgave me for that prank,” said Jack, good-humouredly; “and he was always on the watch for me afterwards.”

“You remember how nearly he had you booked for another court-martial on a race day?”

“And how nicely I outflanked and outwitted him! It was the day of the principal races; I had a horse to run, and more than half the regiment had made a heavy book on him, and a great amount of paper

was expected to change owners on the issue. The lord-lieutenant was to be there, and I was all anxiety to be present at the race, when, as the devil or the adjutant would have it, I found myself in orders the day before—orders for guard! Everybody was going to the course, and not a soul for love or money would take my duty; so with a heavy heart I paraded in the morning; and as the time for the start drew near I saw all our fellows bowl out of barracks in drags and cars attired in sporting mufti and in high spirits. Then came old General Towler, commanding the district, in his blue frogged coat, and with the sabre which he had wielded at the passage of the Bidassoa, Mrs. General Towler, several Misses Towler, all demoiselles of mature age, and the A. D. C. Horatio Towler, captain of a regiment which he never saw, for he wisely preferred his mamma's drawing-room in Kilkenny to broiling on Cape Coast. They all scampered out, then the barrack gates were shut, and all became very quiet and still.

“No sound stirred in the empty parade-yard, for no one was abroad; the sun was scorching and the sentinels stood in their boxes. I thought of the buzz, the glitter, the fun and frolic, the cold fowl, the iced champagne, the brandy and soda-water, the flirtation on the roof of a drag, on the rumble or the dickey—all the excitement and enthusiasm of the races, and more than all, I imagined how my nag would look when the exulting grooms drew his cloths off, the jockey in blue and white colours, and fancy painted him scouring like a whirlwind round the smooth green course, and beating Flying Dutchman, Lady Fanny, Albert, and all the rest of them hollow. As the time of the start drew nigh, my excitement and longing increased, but I knew too well the danger of absenting myself from a guard. I knew, moreover, that old Towler, who spent half his life in laying traps for subalterns (ensigns being his peculiar aversion), was daily furnished with a card, whereon

were written the names of the officers on garrison duty, and he had seen me on guard as he passed out. The barracks are so empty, I'll never be missed, thought I, and may steal to the course in the crowd. So, as the distance was short, I hurried off on foot and in full uniform just as I had paraded for duty, with my sword, white belt, and shako. Lost amid the wilderness of tents, stalls, thimblers, and rolipoly men, carriages, gigs, cars, and vehicles of every kind, I reached the grand stand, or rather its vicinity, and was eagerly looking about for my horse as the bell had rung at the starting-point, and the race had begun long since, when I heard a tremendous cheer, and saw my own jockey borne past me, shoulder high. Blue and white had won! In my excitement and confusion I forgot all about my uniform, and was pushing, jostling, and fighting my way through the delighted mob, when the basilisk expression of two fierce grey eyes that peered from under their shaggy brows arrested me.

"Heavens and earth! I was close to the carriage of old General Towler, and there he sat, sullen as Jove upon his throne of thunder clouds, scanning me and his card,—the fatal detail card, alternately.

"‘I am done for!’ was my first thought; ‘I have won the race, but lost my commission; he has nailed me at last!’ and my heart sunk, as I thought of the too probable consequences of a second court-martial.

"‘To the barracks,’ I heard him say imperiously, and I knew in a moment that he was deliberately driving off to turn out the main guard, and thus to prove me absent therefrom. I felt that I was lost—that my commission, the pride of my heart, was gone; and had not a happy thought seized me, I should not have been here to night. Just as the carriage turned round, I sprang up behind it, and stood there unseen, but stooping low, because the roof was open.

“‘You’re sure it is that impertinent fellow, Slingsby, of the Sixth?’ said Mrs. Towler, with a smile of malicious satisfaction.

“‘Sure as you are beside me, my love,’ growled the general; ‘bad example to the soldiers—very! subversive of all discipline—I’ll smash him now—absent from guard—a general court-martial——’

“‘A saucy jackanapes,’ said Miss Towler.

“‘Gross dereliction of duty!’

“‘He was most impertinent to Maria at the last ball,’ said Mrs. Towler.

“‘Violation of the articles of war,’ growled the Major General; ‘but here we are close on the barracks—now we shall have him!’

“‘Guard turn out!’ cried the sentry, presenting arms, and facing his post.

“‘Stop, coachman,’ cried the general, as the carriage, with wheels flashing and its steaming bays at full gallop, dashed up to the guard house, where they reared back on their haunches, as the guard formed line, opened ranks, and the drum gave the single customary ruffle, just as I dropped unseen from the foot-board behind, drew my sword, and took my place coolly at the head of my men.

“‘Sergeant,’ roared the general; ‘where’s the officer of the guard—where’s that infernal—where is Mr. Slingsby?’

“‘Here, general,’ said the astonished noncommissioned officer.

“‘I am here, sir,’ said I, haughtily lowering the point of my sword.

“‘Here—you!’ he exclaimed with a glance of astonishment and perplexity, as he fumbled with his confounded detail card; ‘what the deuce—I thought—that will do, however; guard, turn in, sir; coachman, drive on!’

“And the carriage, with the general and all his daughters, with their fringed parasols, rolled away. Old Towler never discovered how I circumvented

him, though he assured his son, the aide-de-camp, that he could have made his affidavit on seeing me at the races, and in ten minutes after found me at the head of my guard more than two miles distant."

Next day Slingsby and I left the garrison on our mission to Seville. He accompanied me with some reluctance, for he disliked the Spaniards, having been frequently among them, and being one who possessed a strange facility for getting into all kinds of scrapes and broils. Before starting we received from the military secretary all the papers connected with the affair of the guarda costa; and, what was of more importance to us, we received from the paymaster's necessary portion of "the soul of Pedro Garcias," and taking with us only our undress uniform and grey great-coats, our swords and revolvers (for one might as well travel without brains as without arms in Spain; besides, Fabrique de Urquija, a devil of a fellow, haunted the Sierra de Ronda), a valise with six shirts each, a box of cubas, and a John Murray, we crossed the isthmus, passed through the Spanish lines about an hour after the morning gun was fired, and with the gorgeous sunrise of a beautiful Spanish day took the wild and lonely road into Andalusia, with well-filled purses, good nags under us, light hearts and thoughtless heads, and in such a frame of mind, that, in pursuit of adventure, we would have faced anything, from a black beetle to a mad bull.

I thought of Donna Paulina (when did I not think of her?) and as the strong ramparts of Gibraltar lessened in our rear, I hummed "Pues por bisarte Minguillo," her coquettish little song of "The Kiss."

Poor Paulina!

CHAPTER IV.

THE VENIA.

WE had left the dull world of matter-of-fact behind us, and were now in the land of romance, where, save the invention of cigars and musket locks, all was unchanged since the days of Charles V ; for while all the world moves around her, Spain alone stands still, torpid and unchanging as her unclouded sun and mighty mountain Sierras.

On reaching Castellar we expected to receive an escort from the officer commanding a troop of cavalry quartered there, a necessary protection against the banditti of Fabrique de Urquija, whose name was now a terror to Andalusia.

It was a Spanish day; the air was clear, ambient, and pure as light; the sky was cloudless, and exhibited a deep immensity of blue, rendering the most distant objects visible in the blaze of the soaring sun, that whitened the rocks and the narrow horse path we pursued; while the dark pine branches and the light cork trees were unstirred by a breath of wind.

We passed through San Roque, a town of some importance to Spain, since Sir George Rooke in 1704 took Gibraltar, which was almost the only acquisition of the English arms until the union with Scotland, and consequent consolidation of the naval and military resources of the two kingdoms. After leaving it, our route lay through that beautiful forest of cork trees which spreads over a great part of the country, and borders on the bay of Gibraltar.

At Venla we passed several strings of galley slaves,

who were chained together, and at work upon the road. As we trotted past, they paused to glare at us, and their dark sparkling eyes shone through the tangled masses of their jetty hair, which was the sole covering of their heads alike under the winter rain and the scorching summer sun.

At Castellar we were disappointed. We expected escort, as the cavalry had marched to Seville, so we halted at a venta, or inn, and were strongly advised by the hostalero, or keeper, to tarry with him awhile, for the approaching night at least, as several outrages had lately been committed in the neighbourhood, and a band of broken Carlist soldiers and runaway galley slaves had hovered for some time in the Sierra de Ronda, making themselves the terror of all the country from Cortes to Vente Quemada.

"Disparate," said I; "nonsense!"

"A sly trick to get us to stay over night," said Slingsby, as he took a long draught of Xeres and cold water, and renewed his attack on the boiled fowl, which was all the patron could as yet provide for us.

"Madre maria purissima!" said the latter, turning up his glossy black eyes; "may you be forgiven your incredulity; but, señores, did you not remark the number of crosses by the wayside as you came along?"

"We did," said Jack; "and what then?"

"Each one marks the scene of some 'novedad.'"

"Novelty—a new term for a murder, Señor Patron?"

"And the poles, with robbers' heads on them?"

"I observed one," said I.

"And singular to say, a bird had built its nest in it," added Jack; "it was a mere skull."

"One—madre de Dios—are there not a hundred? yet, señores, you could not ride without an escort, even so far as Alcala—the thing is not to be thought of."

"What think you of all this sort of thing, Ramble?" asked Slingsby.

Before I could reply, a loud cracking of whips, the creaking of ill-greased wheels, and the clamour of voices were heard. On this the hostalero cried,—

"It is the convoy already—the convoy from Marbella to Medina—your graces will excuse me."

He hurried away, and in a minute after came breathlessly back with intelligence that it had been fired on by Don Fabrique with at least fifty thousand banditti, at Benelauria, near the foot of the Sierra, and but for a case of reliques carried by a padre of Medina, every soul must have perished; but would not the noble señores come down stairs, and count the bullet-holes in the pannels?"

"The bullet-holes!"

"By Jove, this affair becomes interesting," said Slingsby, and we descended to the inn-yard, where we found ourselves amid a Babel of tongues and dire confusion. Let the reader imagine four calessos, all painted in bright stripes of red and yellow, the royal colours of Spain, each with pannels full of glaring flowers and absurd miraculous pictures, a body like a cabriolet, supported on a ponderous under-carriage with high wheels, all splashed with mud. Each calesso was drawn by two mules, the collars and bridles of which were covered with clear jangling bells. These were each driven by a Jehu who wore all the brilliant colours of the rainbow in his jacket, sash, breeches, and embroidered leggings. These four calessos were full of passengers. There were soap-boilers and potters of Seville, sleek, well fed, and in easy circumstances; the old padre, José Torquemada, the curate of Medina, in a broad hat and long black cassock buttoned to the throat; over his shoulders he wore a broad cape, and in his hands were his beads, breviary, and the case of reliques which had just been of such signal service. There were several cotton manufacturers on their way to Cadiz; but all—save a military man who wore a

green surtout and forage cap laced with gold—most unwarlike personages to meet a party of robbers in a Spanish sierra.

The drivers, we were told, were singing merrily, the bells were jangling, the passengers all smoking, chatting, and laughing, as they entered a defile in the hills, when suddenly the rocks and trees which overhung the rough path were found to be manned—

“Don Fabrique de Urquija!” was the cry, shots were fired—maladito! and the escort, which consisted of a sergeant and four dragoons of the Spanish army, turned their horses and fled at full speed, leaving the convoy to the mercy of the outlaws, who captured the rear calesso, cut its springs, shot the driver, and had retained it with all its contents and passengers. The other four had escaped, and came thundering down the narrow path to Castellar with all their passengers shouting with terror, the mules galloping, the bells jangling, and every vehicle plunging like a ship in a storm.

“Morte de Dios!” added the military personage, whom they called Don Joaquim, and from whom we had this account; “it was a narrow escape, for Urquija is a very Tartar—a blood-drinker! You belong to the British service, señores, I presume?”

“Yes,” said I.

“To the garrison in Gibraltar, of course?”

“Of course; we have no other garrison in Spain.”

“And you are on leave, señores?”

“Si, señor, on leave, and going to Seville,” said I, conceiving that to tell our real object to this inquisitive officer might not be conducive to the cultivation of mutual good-will.

“I also am an officer,” said he, bowing; “and belong to the Portuguese service—Major in the ancient Regiment of St. Anthony.”

“But you are a Spaniard,” said I.

“The señor is right; but my father was tied to a post one fine morning, and shot by Don Ramon de Cabrera; it gave me a disgust at Spain, for I saw it

done, so I entered the service of Portugal. Come, hombres, I am glad to meet two brothers of the sword; we shall have a fresh bota of Xeres, and be comfortable for the night. After this devilish piece of work, the convoy cannot proceed without an escort; it must halt till morning, so let us all be happy together. I shall be in Seville myself ere long, and hope to have the pleasure of meeting you there."

Don Joaquim seemed to be about thirty-five years of age; in figure he was somewhat short and punchy; his face was round and good-humoured, though at times it became stern, sinister, and almost fierce, if anything excited him. His hair was shorn short, but his moustaches were long and lanky, and hung over his mouth like black leeches, imparting to his face an aspect not unlike the old portraits of Philip II. His light-green military surtout, like his scarlet trousers, was edged with gold lace, and he wore an enormous sabre, which clattered in a scabbard of polished brass. At a button-hole hung a little order of merit; the bag, or end of his forage-cap, drooped upon his right shoulder; his mouth was never without one of those paper cigaritos of which he was constantly employed in the manufacture from a little paper book and tobacco bag; and now I hope the reader sees before him, or her, Major Don Joaquim of the Regiment of St. Anthony, otherwise styled of Lagos.

The hostalero was in high spirits at the arrival of so much good company, and being assured of their detention for at least a night or two before the escort could join them, he bustled about, applauding, vociferating, and directing, while getting their baggage, portmanteaux, and bales under cover, ever and anon pausing to count or draw attention to seven or eight bullet perforations which had been made in the calesso panels, to the great perturbation of the "easy-going" soap-boilers and "well-to-do" cotton merchants, who had no taste or predilection for such matters, and could not see how or why Don Joaquim considered

it such "a capital joke," that one had received a bullet through his hat; another had received one through the collar of his coat; and that a third had his cigar—*demonio*—the very cigar carried out of his teeth!

Soon we were all grouped together, some thirty or so of us, in the large apartment of the *venta*, some seated on stools, others on chairs, but many on piles of baggage; bottles of *vinto tinto*, and skins of the common wine, were set abroach; fresh cigars were made up from those little pouches and paper books which every Spaniard and Turk carry about with him; Don Joaquim produced his guitar, and favoured the company with a song. To my surprise it was Paulina's—"Pues por bisarte Minguillo"—and we all became merry and noisy. The soap-boiler forgot the hole in his *sombrero*; the potter, the dangerous mode in which he had lost his cigar, even the old padre José relaxed his grim solemnity, and slyly relaxed the lower buttons of his long *cassock*, to make more room for supper and the purple contents of the thrice-blessed *bota*; while the *patrona*, a buxom dame in a short skirt and scarlet stockings, and wearing large silver ear-rings, superintended the cooking of a vast dish of ham and eggs—"huevos y tocino"—from which the fragrant steam went hissing up the chimney, while the drivers in their gaudy jackets sat near the glowing hearth, chewing biscuits and *bacalao*, or roasting the sputtering chestnuts, joining in our jokes and stories, while the happy *hostalero* bustled about, superintending everything and everybody.

The company of the convoy soon recovered from the terror of their late adventure, and anxious speculations or terrible surmises as to the fate of their captured friends, sobered down into hopes that they would soon join us; but the ruddy evening deepened on the beautiful mountains of the Ronda; the darkening peaks threw their shadows on the vine-clad plains, the stars began to gleam in the dark blue vault, and

the last slice of ham and egg had sent its fragrance up the wide chimney, but no fugitive reached the now closed and barricadoed gate of the venta at Castellar.

As one may easily suppose, the late occurrence caused the conversation to run very much upon robbers and their exploits; thus we heard stories of wanton cruelty sufficient to make the hair of a well-regulated Briton stand erect on end; but as these tales closely resembled the common stock of robber narratives, especially such as we are told by romancers, who have been smitten with what has been termed the bandittiphobia, I will not attempt to rehearse them all. One or two of these relations struck me as having something peculiar in them.

"I was once passing through Antequera," began the venerable José Torquemada, "that city so famed for robbers and picaros—"

"Ay de mi! señor padre," said a goatherd of Ronda, "it was once famed for something better."

"True, my child," replied the old priest, approvingly; "for it was there Don Ferdinand the Just, the valiant Infante of Castile, in the fifteenth century, founded the noble order of the Jar of Lilies, in honour of our Blessed Lady, by whose aid his good and valiant knights stormed the city from the Moors, and slew fifteen thousand of those God-abandoned infidels. Ah mi hijo! it was something to be a Spaniard then! But to return; I was once passing through that same city of Antequera, when I had an adventure with Don Fabrique—"

"With Fabrique de Urquija?" exclaimed all, drawing nearer the padre and lowering their voices.

"Ave Maria!" exclaimed Don Joaquim, "this must indeed be something worth hearing."

"The more so, as I realised a pretty round sum by it," continued the priest. "You all know Antequera, señores, a handsome town on the plain between Granada and Seville, and situated in a land that teems with oil and wine. One night when the hour was late, and no moon had risen, I was passing

through the great street which leads to the old Moorish castle, and counting ever and anon in the pocket of my cassock three poor pistareens, which were all I possessed, but which I was hastening to bestow upon a poor widow. Her husband, a brave guerilla, had been taken in a skirmish at the Pena de los Enamorados (or Lover's Rock), which stands a league from Antequera, and, after a brave resistance, had been bound with cords, and shot that morning in the Plaza—"

"By the Count de Morella?" cried Don Joaquim.

"Yes, by Cabrera."

"Bah—I thought so," said the major, grinding his teeth; "proceed, reverend padre."

"The little pistareens were all I had in the world, and when I thought of the poor widow and her six children weeping by the corpse of their unburied father, and unable to buy masses for his sinful soul, I paused to gaze at the old castle of the Moors, and sighed to know the secret of the treasures that lay hid among its ruins; and then I craved pardon of Madonna for the thought, as all the gold of the infidels is buried under the spell of such enchantment as no man may break and live.

"Well, señores, I was just thinking of these strange things when a hand was laid heavily upon my shoulder; I turned, and by the light of a shrine at the corner of a street, saw a dark face and a tall figure girdled by a scarlet sash full of daggers and pistols.

"'Who are you,' I asked fearlessly.

"'Fabrique de Urquija.'

"'Go, go,' said I, feeling my heart leap at the name; 'I am but a poor priest, and can give you nought but my blessing.'

"'Your blessing be hanged! señor padre, hand over all you possess, or by the Holy Face of Jaen,'—and grinding his teeth he grasped a poniard.

"'As I live I possess nothing but my cassock and these poor little pistareens which are for a widow and her starving children.'

“ ‘Then off with the cassock, and give me the pistareens to boot. Your garment I must have, for I mean to play the priest to-night, and visit a dame whom I may make a widow, too, some of these days.’

“ ‘In vain I begged him to leave me the pistareens, but this demon of avarice only laughed, and touching his pistols said,—

“ ‘Quick, quick, and here take my jacket and maldito, begone without looking behind you.’

“ ‘The exchange was soon made; with a hoarse laugh the robber thrust himself into my threadbare cassock, and with loathing I drew on his old velvet jacket, which was tattered and full of holes. He then bade me farewell with mock solemnity; and glad to escape so easily I hastened away, but had not gone many yards when I heard the voice of the terrible Urquija commanding me to ‘stop;’ and believing that, repenting of his clemency, he only meant to poniard me, I turned and fled with all the speed of my poor old legs, fervently invoking the saints, and praying to Madonna that the vision of the sacrilegious pursuer might be obscured, and that I might escape.

“ ‘Come back, padre, come back, there is a mistake,’ I heard him crying; ‘por vida del demonio, stop, or it will be the worse for you!’

“ ‘But, blessed be Heaven, I escaped and reached the humble house of the widow, where her little ones gathered round me, and sought to clutch as usual the long skirts of my cassock; but, ay de mi, they were gone, and with them my pistareens, so that I was without the means of buying bread for the children of the dead guerilla.

“ ‘What shall I do!’ thought I, and mechanically felt the pocket of the jacket; it contained something hard: what is this! I pulled it forth, and Madre Maria! found the sudden cause of the robber’s oaths, pursuit, and vociferations, for by the exchange of our apparel I had become the possessor of one hundred golden pistoles!

"I had never held so much money in my hands before; and for a long time I was quite bewildered how to dispose of such a treasure. First I made the hearts of the widow and her little ones glad, and the rest I bestowed on the poor old nuns of St. Theresa, who had just been stripped of all they possessed in the world, and were begging their bread in the public streets of Antiquera—thanks to the liberal Government of Spain."

The idea of the robber so egregiously outwitting himself occasioned great satisfaction among all the listeners; the goatherd was so delighted that he thrice flung his hat up to the ceiling, and a loud 'viva' greeted the old padre as he finished his little story.

"I once had a more narrow escape than yours, Padre José," said the Major Don Joaquim, "and but for the intervention of the blessed St. Anthony of Portugal whose brother officer I have the felicity to be, I had not had the happiness of addressing you all to-night, or enjoying these roasted castanos, or the most excellent vino tinto of the worthy señor patron."

"Through the intervention of San Antonio," exclaimed all present; "do tell us, señor oficial, all about this."

"You have heard of St. Anthony, señores?" said the major to us.

"One of the seven champions of Christendom, who broke enchantments, fought with giants, and did all that sort of thing," said Slingsby; "of course, who has not heard of him?"

"Ah, who, indeed?" said the major.

His words smacked of a miracle, and every one present became at once interested. Lighting a fresh cigar, and replenishing his wine-horn from the big-bellied leathern bota, the major pushed his red forage cap a little more on one side, fixed his dark eyes on the glowing embers, and, with all the air of a man who is rallying his forces to tell an interesting narrative, began in the following words.

CHAPTER V

THE REGIMENT OF SAN ANTONIO.

You must know, Señora patrona, and señores, my friends, that Saint Anthony, the patron of Portugal and patriarch of monks, though born at Heraclea in Upper Egypt, on the borders of Acadia, so long ago as the third century, is now a member of the battalion in which I have the honour to hold the commission of major; and that he has been many times visible in its ranks, mounting guard, and always when under fire, or engaged with the French or Spaniards. Under Wellington in the last war he was frequently seen among our men, clad in a cloak of white wool, and wearing an inner garment of hair-cloth, with a bell tied to his neck, and a pig trotting beside him, for it was his favourite animal when he was hermit near the village of Coma. When our esteemed regiment was first embodied about a century and a half ago at the city of Lagos, in the ancient kingdom of Algarve, the blessed St. Anthony was enrolled in the muster-book thereof, as a private soldier, that he might be its especial patron and protector, even as he is the patron of the whole Portuguese nation.

He conducted himself with such fidelity, valour, and distinction, that he soon passed through the ranks of corporal and sergeant, and having restored, no one exactly knows how, the colours of the regiment, after they were lost at the battle of Almanza in 1706, he was appointed captain, and his pay, together with four marevedis from each soldier, were devoted to buy masses for the souls of our comrades who die on service—a very pretty perquisite, padre José, for mother church.

It would be a vain task in me to attempt enumerating the miracles performed by St. Anthony during the one hundred and eighty seven years he has belonged to the valiant regiment of Lagos in the kingdom of Algarve; for in danger, doubt, difficulty, or death, his comrades have never sought his aid in vain.

Our colours have been thrice lost in battle, after prodigious slaughter you may be sure—being Portuguese colours; and were thrice restored to us, being found quietly in the colonel's tent the next morning, with the naked footmarks of a man and a pig—the blessed pig of course—impressed upon the turf! At the passage of the Guadalquivir, our drum-major was swept away and would have been drowned beyond a doubt, had he not called upon St. Anthony; and lo! an old man of most venerable aspect, clad in skins like this shepherd beside us, but with a long beard and leathern water-bottle hanging at his girdle, suddenly appeared among the reeds by the river side, and stretching out his crook, fished up the ponderous Anibale Pintado lightly as a straw, though he was at that moment in heavy marching order, with knapsack, blanket, great-coat, sword and his canteen, which was full of brandy. Then to think of the wounds that have been closed, the bullets that have been extracted, the bones that have been set, the sick made whole and fit for service, by our soldiers merely thinking on, or praying to, the glorious St. Anthony, would occupy all the paper in the kingdom of Algarve; but his crowning miracle was the birth of a child of the regiment, for one of our soldiers' wives being in labour, during the siege of Roses, and calling upon the saint in her pain, to the astonishment of the whole allied armies was delivered of a little drummer boy in the uniform of the battalion of Lagos! I hope I have now said enough to convince you that the regiment, and every member of it, are under the peculiar protection of the saint, and this, as I am about to have

the honour of telling you, I experienced myself, although not a Portugese, but a native of the fair city of Seville; and as a further proof of what I have adduced, I will take the liberty of reading to you from my pocket-book, the following certificate of the military service performed by the saint—which certificate I copied fairly from the books of the noble regiment of Lagos in the kingdom of Algarve, being the document which was forwarded by one of my predecessors, then in command of the battalion, when recommending the blessed saint to further promotion from the rank of captain which he had held since the year 1706. (With this long and pompous flourish, the Spaniard opened his pocket-book, and read a translation from the Portugese, which ran as follows.)*

“Don Herculeo Antonio Carlos Luiz, José Maria de Albuquerque e Arajo de Magalhaens Homem, noble of Her Majesty's household, cavalier of the sacred order of St. John of Jerusalem, and of the most illustrious the military order of Christ, lord of the towns and partidos of Moncarapacho and Terragudo, hereditary alcalde-mayor of the ancient city of Faro by the sea, and Major of the Regiment of Infantry of the noble city of Lagos in the kingdom of Algarve, for her most faithful majesty, Donna Maria, Francesco Isabella the first; whom God and the Blessed Virgin long preserve, &c., &c., &c.

“I hereby attest and certify to all who shall see these presents, signed at the bottom with my sign-manual, and the broad seal of my family arms a little to the left thereof, that the Lord St. Anthony of Lisbon (commonly and most falsely called of Padua) has been enlisted, and has borne a place in this regiment since the 24th of January, ever since the year of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ 1668.

“I do further certify, upon my word of honour, as

* See notes at end

a noble, a knight, and a good Catholic, what hereunder followeth.

“That on the said 24th of January, 1668, by order of His Majesty Don Pedro II. (whom God hath in glory), then Regent of the valiant kingdoms of Portugal and Algarve for Don Alphonso VI.,—St. Anthony was duly enlisted as a private soldier in this Infantry Regiment of Lagos, when it was first formed by command of the same illustrious prince; and of that holy enlistment there is a register extant in vol. i. of the records of the said regiment, page 143, wherein he gave as security or caution for his good conduct, the queen of angels, who became answerable to the colonel that he would never desert his colours, but always behave as became a good Portugese grenadier. Hence did the saint continue to serve and do duty as a private until the 12th of March, 1683, on which day the same Prince Regent became King of Portugal by the death of his brother Don Alphonso VI., when he was graciously pleased to promote St. Anthony to the rank of Lieutenant of Grenadiers in the said regiment, for having, a short time before, valiantly put himself at the head, of a detachment of the regiment which was marching from Jurumenha to the garrison of Olivença, both in the province of Alentizo, and beat off four times their number of Castilians who had been lying in ambush for them, with the intention of carrying them all prisoners to the castle of Badajoz, the enemy having obtained information by spies, of the march of the said detachment, every soldier of which saw our blessed patron, visibly, and to all appearance in the body, and attended by his pig.

“I do further certify, that in all the above-cited registers, there is not any note of St. Anthony being guilty of bad conduct, disorder, or drunkenness; frequenting taverns, or other improper places; nor of his ever having been flogged, or sent to the guard-house when a private: ~~That~~ during the whole time

he has been an officer, now about one hundred and nine years, he has constantly done his duty with the greatest alacrity, at the head of the grenadiers, upon all occasions, in peace or war, conducting himself like an officer and a gentleman of good breeding; on all these accounts I hold him most worthy of being promoted to the rank of aggregate-major to our noble regiment of Lagos, with every other favour Her Majesty may be graciously pleased to bestow upon him. In testimony whereof, I have hereto affixed my name, at the Castle of Belem, this 25th day of March, in the year of our redemption, 1777.

“MAGALHAENS HOMEM.”

(Thus ended this wonderful certificate, the contents of which, together with the pompous gravity of the reader, made Jack and I almost choke with suppressed laughter. The major then continued)—

Hereupon Her Most Faithful Majesty, who reigned at that time—now seventy-eight years ago—was pleased to promote the saint to the rank prayed for, and he is now our lieutenant-colonel by brevet. Once in each year it is the custom to send an officer to Lisbon to receive the pay and perquisites of St. Anthony from the royal treasury, and in the course of last year this most honourable duty devolved upon me.

We were then quartered at Barbacena in the jurisdiction of Elvas; and to this place I travelled alone from Lisbon, with the pay of the saint, which was to be given to the care of our chaplain. Being in moidores, it was not very bulky, but its value was great—its sanctity greater; and after traversing in safety the whole province of Alentijo, it was with some anxiety I saw the mountain Sierra, which lay between me and my destination, rising in my front, about sunset. The hope of being able to get across those rocky hills before the approaching night set fairly in never occurred to me. I found myself in a

solitary spot, without shelter near, or any place where information of the right way could be gathered, and my horse was growing weary.

The sunlight died away behind me, and shed its last rays on the white walls, the square campanile and tall cypresses of a convent which crowned a height on my left; and on the red round towers of an old castle that topped a rock on my right; but both were in ruins and desolate, as the wars of the infidel Moors, ages ago, had left the first, and the desolating retreat of Marshal Massena had left the second. The older fragments of a Roman aqueduct lay between, and half hidden among wild shrubs. The pathway was rugged; untamed goats scrambled about; snakes hissed in the long grass, and eagles screamed in mid air. Ave Maria! it was impossible to conceive a place more dreary and desolate; but the way became still wilder, and as I progressed into the gorge of the Sierra, even the ruined works of man and the traces of his feet disappeared. I was in a desert, and, save the faint crescent moon, without a light or guide.

As I rode slowly on, thinking of the bright golden moidores of our Lord St. Anthony, with which my pouch was blessed, and reflecting on the prize they would be for any sacrilegious picaros who might be hovering in this dark wilderness, ever and anon humming a song, muttering an ave, and feeling the percussion caps on my pistols, I suddenly met a strange figure in the dim moonlight—a goat-herd, as he seemed to me.

He was clad in a zamarra of sheepskin, which he wore with the wool outwards; his white hair hung in tangled masses upon his shoulders; a bota was slung at his girdle, and he carried a stout Portuguese cajado, with a little cross stick nailed thereon, to give it more the aspect of a pastoral staff, than a weapon of defence.

“Vaya usted con Dios, Señor Major,” said he.

“God be with you,” I reiterated, a little scared on

finding that this stranger knew my name; "you have the advantage of me, Señor Pastor."

"Hombre, do you think so? but do not be alarmed, for I am an old Christian, without stain of Moor or Jew in my veins. I am no enchanter——"

"Ave Maria, I should hope not!"

"Yet I know that you have in your pouch the pay of St. Anthony of Lisbon, whom rogues and fools style of Padua—what the devil should he have to do with Padua?—in your left breast pocket, all in fair round moidores of gold—eh, señor?"

"Very true, pastor," said I, slipping a finger into my near holster, and keeping my horse well in hand and beyond the reach of his cajado; "but how came you to know me?"

"I know every officer and soldier in the regiment of Lagos as well as if I had made them—and you especially, Señor Major."

"Well—and about the moidores," said I, uneasily; "you know of them, and what then?"

"Merely this, Señor Don Joaquim; that if you would arrive at Barbacena to-morrow with the pay of the patron of the regiment of Lagos——"

"In the kingdom of Algarve," suggested Jack Slingsby.

"Si, señor; and would hand it over safe and sound to the reverend chaplain," continued the old man, in a manner so impressive that a chill came over me, the more so as I saw his sunken eyes shining in the dim moonlight like two bits of green glass; "you will beware, my son and comrade, how you taste the wine of Xeres to-night."

"The wine of Xeres, father pastor," said I, with a loud laugh; "Heaven forgive you for the tempting thought; I am not likely to taste aught to-night but the chilling dew; yet if a good cup of Xeres did come my way——"

"Avoid it as you would poison, or by the soul of St. Anthony you will repent it."

At that name I raised my hand to my cap in salute, like a good soldier of the regiment of Lagos; while waving his hand authoritatively, the old man hobbled up the slope of the mountain pass and disappeared. As he did so I heard the tinkle of a bell, and for the first time perceived a little pig trotting by his side as he vanished in the shadow of the mountain and its moonlit rocks.

The scales fell from my eyes; por el Santo de los Santos, he was no other than our Lord Saint Anthony, whom I had seen. Who but he would have termed me "son and comrade?" sinner and fool that I was. The hair of my flesh stood up, as the Scripture says, and with a prayer on my lips I gored my poor nag with the spurs and dashed along the pass of the Sierra for two leagues more until the poor animal almost sank beneath me; but perceiving rest necessary for him, I reined up at the door of a lonely wayside inn, in a part of the country which was entirely unknown to me, and which seemed to be overshadowed by mountain peaks and masses of rock, the features and outlines of which were strange, and to me gloomy and fantastic. In my excitement, and the holy terror under which I laboured, I had evidently lost the path, and thus mistaking my way, had ridden, Heaven and St. Anthony alone knew whither.

Solitary, dark, and desolate as this posada seemed,—and it was just the kind of place we so often read of in romances as being a rendezvous for robbers, and for having a landlord in their interest, with trap-doors under the beds, stains of blood upon the floors, old skeletons in the cellars, and a terrible reputation for mysterious appearances and unaccountable disappearances—it was a welcome halting-place for one so weary, so thirsty, and anxious as I was then, and so full of supernatural fear, as I never, for an instant, doubted having seen the blessed patron of our regiment, and to me at that time the human countenance even of a robber had been thrice welcome.

Though the hour was late the hostalero had not gone to bed. He seemed a civil and respectable man, and smiled with good-humour when he saw me, with all the care of an old traveller and the suspicion of a true Spaniard, transfer my pistols from their holsters to my girdle, a movement which seemed to fill with alarm the miserable and drabbish-looking Maritornes, who seemed to be the sole assistant of the patrona. Vague fancies and a sense of alarm were floating uppermost in the current of my thoughts; and being most anxious to start betimes when day broke, I left the saddle on my horse, as I stabled him in the lower apartment of the posada, for you may know, señores, that the Portuguese inns are constructed exactly like those among us here in Spain, the lower story being entirely one vast and clay-floored chamber, appropriated to the cattle and baggage of travellers. I merely relaxed the saddle-girth and curb-chain, but left my Andalusian jennet all ready for marching, when the morning came, and then ascended by a wooden trap-stair to the upper story, where the patrona had a steaming supper of ham and eggs, just such as we have had, well seasoned with pepper and garlic, spread for me, with a bunch of raisins and a choice flask of—ah, demonio! my heart leaped when I saw it—the wine of Xeres de la Frontierra.

A prayer rose to my lips, I thought of St. Anthony, but felt strong and composed, believing that I was under the peculiar care of that blessed patron of the regiment of Lagos. I would have left the little venta and betaken myself once more to the road, but, if any snare was really laid for me, such a movement might only render me more liable to an open and deliberate attack.

“I will be wary,” thought I; “let me watch well, even as our holy patron watches me. Xeres! ouf, I would rather drink the salt lake of Fuente de la Piedra than touch a drop of it.”

I felt morally certain that it was poisoned or drugged for some fatal purpose, and that in the tasting of it lay the main part of my danger. I finished the rasher of ham and the fragrant huevos; and to lull all suspicion asked my host to join me in discussing the bottle of Xeres as he uncorked it.

"The señor would, perhaps, excuse him. Xeres always made him ill, maldito—yes, and there was no doctor nearer than Elvas or Abrantes; but he would take a glass of aguadiente to my health and successful journey."

"Rascally picaro!" thought I; "you have other reasons for declining the Xeres, but I shall mar them yet."

I might have forced him with my sword at his throat to drink a cupful; but I dissembled, and filling out a bumper from the leathern bota, raised it to my lips, pretending to taste. I saw, then, the slow stealthy eyes of the hostalero watching me keenly.

"It has a peculiar flavour," said I.

"Flavour, señor?" he asked, anxiously.

"But not unpleasant."

"It is from the grapes of Puerto de Santa Maria, like those of Tribujena, as the Señor Caballero will perceive; they have a peculiar flavour—sharp, is it not?"

"Yes, but as I said before, not unpleasant," continued I, placing my pistols on the table, and availing myself of an opportunity to pour the whole of my bumper back into the bota, and this I achieved unseen. Some grounds which remained at the bottom of the crystal glass assured me that the wine was drugged.

"I have a pigskin full of wine from the grapes of Don Carlos, or rather I should say of my Lord the Marquis de Santa Cruz, who now owns the vineyard; and if your grace——"

"Many thanks," said I, pouring out a second bumper, so that the wine frothed in the glass; "but be assured I shall content myself with this most excellent bottle of Xeres," and taking another opportunity,

while the patrona was telling her beads near the fire, and the worthy patron was below pretending to groom my horse—but no doubt to appraise its furniture which he expected to possess before morning—I repeated the manoeuvre, and poured the wine back into its leathern receptacle; thus my deluded entertainers were led to believe that I had taken enough to drug a regiment of Asturians.

I scrutinised my hostess; she was a swarthy and dark-skinned Portuguese; her hair, which was coarse and thick as the mane of a steed, she had knotted in a coronet round her head, and over this she wore a yellow shawl. Her features were square, massive, and repulsive; and her arms and legs, which her scanty garments fully displayed, were disgustingly powerful and muscular.

“Are you not somewhat lonely here, señora?” I asked, when her orisons were over.

“Yes; but then we are never disturbed. Once, indeed, some drunken contrabandistas, riding to Gibraltar, made a noise at our door; but my husband shot one with his escopeta, the rest fled, and we have never been molested since. But ere long the new railway from Lisbon to Abrantes will change everything—for so the priests predict.”

“You talk of this little shooting affair with delightful coolness,” said I, “and just as if that devil of a contrabandista had been a crow. Ah, and so he was shot?”

“Yes, and buried about a mile beyond this,” replied the woman, over whose dark eyes there passed a savage gleam; “perhaps, caballero, you observed the cross as you came along?”

“You forget that I came this morning from Montemor o Novo, where I wish I had stayed with all my heart.”

“Ah, our caza is a very poor one, señor,” growled the host, with a glance at my glass and another at the bota; “but none ever complain of it after they leave us.”

“I believe you, my lad,” said I, with a glance at the

cuchillo in his sash ; madre mia ! it was at least twelve inches long in the blade. He detected my expression and said,—

“ I am always well armed, Señor Caballero, for my little wife, our niece, and I, are the only inhabitants here. They are apt to be timid at times ; thus I always keep my escopeta loaded, and six junkets of lead in that old brass-mouthed trabujo over the mantel-piece ; so with my knife and strong bolts, bars and shutters, we could stand a very good siege, even if Don Fabrique de Urquija and all his band were assailing us. One glass more of the Xeres before you retire, señor—no ?—well, how such a sober Caballero belongs to the regiment of Lagos surpasses my—a thousand pardons, señor ; I meant no offence ; but a poor man must have his little joke as well as a rich one, and I am sure a noble Caballero will excuse it. So you won’t take one glass more of the Xeres before retiring, well, well—this way, señor, up this stair—take care of the step, and now, señor, Bueno noches, and may all good attend you.”

I was alone. I was in my sleeping apartment, a miserable loft, to which I had ascended by means of a trap-door and trap-stair. The bed was poor and shabby ; a thousand discolorations, the combined result of damp and dirt covered the ill-plastered walls and bare wooden floor. A small and ill-glazed window opened to the dark mountains, behind which the moon, a pale crescent, was just sinking, and to the deep black gorge which yawned between their peaks like some vast Titan’s grave. There was not a sound upon those solemn hills, or in that savage pass through which the roadway wound ; there was no sound in the posada below me, and as I set down the candle and listened, I heard only its sputtering and the beating of my own heart.

I knelt down, and drawing forth my beads and crucifix, said my prayers like a good Catholic, and solemnly invoked the protection of St. Anthony. After this, apprehension almost vanished.

If any attempt was made upon me in the night, I had but one man to oppose—the hostalero, and surely I was a match for him. But then there was his wife, a powerful Asturian termagant, who had doubtless the cunning of a fox with the strength of a bull. I looked about for something wherewith to secure the trap-door, but found nothing; my bedstead was the only piece of furniture, and it was too weighty for removal. I might have lain down and slept above the trap; but the idea did not then occur to me; and at times, as my candle burned low, such is the weakness of the human heart, that I began to mistrust even the protection of my Lord St. Anthony, and think I was unwise in not quitting this unblessed posada, instead of retiring to a bed-chamber, as the hostalero might be joined by others more ruffianly than himself, and thus overpower me.

“No, no,” thought I; “no others will come; the rascal trusts in his Xeres, and I shall soon see the sequel.”

I drew off my boots and flung them heavily on the floor, as one might do who was undressing; and having thus, as I supposed, deceived any one who was listening, drew them carefully on again; tightened the buckle of my waist-belt, and loosened my good Toledo sabre in its sheath. I then examined my pistols; ay de mi! what were my emotions on finding the percussion caps removed, and that my pouch, with the remainder, was in my holsters below!

My heart stood still on beholding this, and an emotion of rage shook my heart, for I now remembered having laid them on the table beside me in case of accident, for I once had a friend who was killed by a pistol exploding in his belt. The patrona, while laying the supper table, or bustling about me, had adroitly—but the saints alone know how—removed the caps.

Twenty times I searched every pocket, in the faint and desperate hope of finding a stray one. Not one—they were all below with my holsters.

“Ass that I am!” thought I, replacing them with a sigh in my belt; “this will be a lesson of prudence that may cost me dear.”

At that moment the candle-end sank down in the iron holder; it shot one red flush upwards on the cobwebbed ceiling and damp, discoloured walls; on the ill-jointed trap-door which led to the lower story, and expired. I was in darkness at last, with no companions but my Toledo and my own thoughts. The first was silent—the second sufficiently uncomfortable

Sleepless and watchful, I lay on the miserable pallet for more than an hour, till the silence began to oppress me, and in spite of myself, my eyes were closing. Could it be the drug—could it be the wine that slowly was sealing them up? Nonsense; I had but put it to my lips, and I struggled to shake off the coming sleep. Yet, I must have closed my eyes for a moment, for I started suddenly, like one who dreams he is on the brink of a precipice. A strange shivering—a minute, pricking sensation ran all over me from head to foot, and from a state of drowsiness, I sprang all at once to the sharpest wakefulness, and grasped the hilt of my drawn sabre.

A dim light was now ascending from the floor of the apartment, and I perceived the trap-door was lifted up, and the round bullet-head of the hostalero appeared, with his deep-set stealthy eyes, scanning the bed and its occupant, myself, who affected to be sound asleep. Up, up he came, step by step, until he stood by my side, with one hand grasping his long cuchillo, and a finger on his coarse, blubber-like lips, as if he would impose silence on himself, and still his very breathing.

Mueran del Demonio, what a moment it was! I would not endure it again for a million of reals. He came close to the bed; he stooped over me, the knife was lifted up, and I saw its baleful gleam; but at the same instant there was an upward flash, as I swept

my sabre round me, and one stroke cut off three of the robber's fingers, and cleft a fair slice off his right temple—a stroke which stretched him without a cry at my feet. Desperate and furious as a wild beast—half blinded with his own blood, he sprang upon me and we grappled in the dark ; but as his wife, that diabolical Asturian, rushed up the trap-stair, armed with a ponderous cajado, to his aid, I flung him on the bed, for he was weak as a child now. Seeing a figure struggling on the miserable pallet, the woman, who was as furious as an enraged tigress, and who, in the uncertain light, believed that figure to be mine, whirled round her head the cajado—which is the favourite staff of the Portuguese, and is usually seven feet long, with a leaden knob at one end of it—and by one blow dashed out her husband's brains as completely as a cannon-ball would have done.

Madre mia, some of that frightful mess flew over me, and that blow ended the matter, for I uttered a cry of horror, and plunging down the trap-stair, threw myself on my horse, and galloped away. On, on I rode, with no wish but to leave that scene of crime behind me, and at the very place where I was met by that venerable shepherd, whom, until my dying hour, I will maintain to be no other than our blessed St. Anthony, but for whose warning I had drunk that poisoned Xeres, and perished—I overtook a troop of the Carbineros of Alentejo, to whom I told my late adventure.

A party was sent to the little inn, where they found the hostalero brained, as I have said, in that miserable loft, and the hostess almost bereft of her senses, such as they were. But the dragoons placed her on a troop horse, and brought her before the Alcalde of Vimiero, which is the nearest town, and before the next day's noon, she had been garotted and buried by the wayside ; and you may still see her grave, one mile beyond the gates, on the side of the way that leads towards Estremoz and the mountains.

Two days after, I reached Barbacena, our headquarters, in safety, and paid over to our Father Chaplain, the purse of moidores, containing the pay of our extra Lieutenant-Colonel, the blessed St. Anthony. Only a month ago, we marched through the pass of the Sierra, and I found the old posada roofless by the roadside, for it is shunned like that place of horror, the Rio de Muerte; the grass has grown on its floor, and the wild vine overtops its chimney; the merriest muleteer becomes silent as he passes the place, and whips his lagging team down the mountain side, without looking once behind him.

The major of the noble Regiment of Lagos now paused, and looked round with the air of a man who thinks his story has rather made an impression; for he had told it well, and with much gesture and spirit, and completely succeeded in arresting the attention of all in the venta; but of none more than my matter-of-fact friend Jack Slingsby, who had listened to the narrative with a degree of attention which I thought unusual in one so volatile and heedless.

"Your story, major, has had a peculiar interest for me by its striking and close resemblance to an adventure of my own," said Jack, "an adventure to which I can never recur without an emotion of horror."

"Is this the Spanish story you so often refer to, Jack?" said I.

"The story our mess could never get out of me?—yes."

"And shall we hear it now?"

"With pleasure; because it will interest all here, whereas among our own bantering fellows at Gibraltar it would only have subjected me, perhaps, to jibes and jokes, and all that sort of thing, from those who were, perhaps, more thoughtless than myself. Señora patrona, please to have the wine replenished; give us more cigars, and stir up the fire, Ramble, while I pre-

pare to tell you a story—aye, a marvel of a story, in which I had the misfortune to be a principal actor not very long ago.”

“Bravo!” muttered every one.

All were provided with a fresh supply of wine, new cigars were lighted, and Jack found himself the centre of a circle of dark, gleaming, and intelligent eyes, while every ear was waiting for the promised narrative; for among the romantic, adventurous, and marvel-loving Spaniards, as among the wandering Arabs, a storyteller is at all times the principal person in company.

It would be scarcely possible to find a scene more remarkable, or a group more picturesque, than the great apartment presented, in which we were all congregated.

A large fire blazed on its broad hearth, and shed a ruddy glow upon the rough architecture and ill-squared beams of the chamber, from the roof of which hung innumerable bunches of raisins, strings of the garlic onion, pigskins of wine, hams, baskets, and other etcetera. The flood of steady red light that gushed from the hearth glared on the striking forms and foreign faces of the listening group, among whom were the well-conditioned potters and soap-boilers of Seville in their black velvet jackets and gaudy sashes; our patrona, a plump and pretty paisana of Valverde, in her provincial costume, a dark blue skirt, the scantiness of which displayed her well-turned legs and handsome feet encased in little shoes of untanned leather, while the gathered masses of her smooth black hair shone in the glow of light; there, too, sat the old padre José of Medina in his sable cape and long cassock, and a grisly goatherd of the Ronda clad from neck to knee in sheepskins, with a weatherbeaten sombrero slouched over his sallow visage; a knife and bota, castanets and flute, at his girdle, to which descended his snow-white beard, giving him the aspect of St. Anthony in the major's story; then there was the major himself in his light green frock-coat, scarlet

cap and trowsers, with a cigar glowing like a hot coal in the centre of his heavy thick mustache ; then there was an old unhoused Franciscan, begging for that subsistence of which the new Government had deprived his order ; a charming young Gitana, tall and beautiful in form, with a clear olive complexion and magnificent eyes ; and by her side sat a free, jolly Catalan reaper, whom in defiance of all gypsy rule and immemorial custom she had taken as her spouse ; so it must be acknowledged that if Jack's audience was not select, it had at least the merit of being so remarkable in costume and character, that a painter or novelist would have been delighted with the whole group, its background, and accessories.

"In many of its features," said Slingsby, "my story is so similar to the one just related by the major, that I am assured you cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance. The adventure made a deep impression upon me ; and though several months have passed since it occurred, the whole affair is as fresh in my mind as if it had happened only yesterday. On leaving the 6th Regiment," continued Jack, turning to me, "I went for a few months into the Highlanders. but, being an Englishman, I never felt at home in the kilt, so I exchanged into our present corps, which will account for my being in the Mediterranean at the time referred to.—So now for the story."

"Bravo, señor !" said the major of the regiment of Lagos ; "you speak Spanish like a good Christian. We are all attention."

Jack bowed, stuck his glass in his eye, tipped the ashes off his cigar with the nail of his forefinger, and began the following story, which deserves an entire chapter devoted to itself.

CHAPTER VI

LA POSADA DEL CAVALLO.

IN the summer of last year, I was proceeding home to Britain on leave of absence from my regiment, the —th Highlanders, which were then, and are still, lying in garrison at Malta. Favoured by the friendship of her commander, and my good friend and old school-fellow, Lieutenant John Hall, I had a passage given to me in Her Majesty's Sloop Blonde, of twenty-six guns; and after a pleasant run for a few days, a smart breeze, which we encountered off Almunecar, when sailing along the coast of Spain, brought down some of our top hamper, and we ran in to Malaga to repair the damage.

It was a beautiful and sunny evening when our anchor plunged into the shining waters of that deep bay which presents so superb a line of coast, and the background of which is formed by the undulating line of the Sierra de Mija towering into the pure blue sky of Spain, and bounding, in the distance, the flat and fertile Vega.

From the quarter-deck of the Blonde, we had a magnificent prospect of Malaga, with its stately mansions, its domes, its spires and snowy kiosks, bathed in a warm yellow tint as the sun's rays faded along the Vega, and the shadows deepened on its hills, clothed with vineyards and plantations of orange, almond, lemon and olive trees. The gaudy Spanish flag descended from the dark ramparts of the old Moorish fortress of Gibralfaro as the evening gun was fired from the guard-ship; and then, as the sun set behind the mountains, the bells tolled for vespers

in the lofty steeple of the square Cathedral, and a red lambent light began to glimmer on the tall brick chimneys of that extensive iron-foundry, which (alas for romance!) a thoroughly practical Scotsman has built in Malaga, where it finds food and work for hundreds, in smelting the ore of the adjacent hills, while it pollutes the cerulean sky of Granada.

Bent upon a ramble or adventure, the second-lieutenant (Jack Hall) and I took our fowling-pieces, and, leaving our swords behind us—at least I took only my regimental dirk—were pulled ashore in the dingy, which landed us at one of those piers that project from the city into the sea, forming part of that noble mole which measures seven hundred yards in length.

Leaving our guns and shooting apparatus at a hotel, we wandered about the town; visited the Alcazaba, which must once have been a fortress of vast strength; then the old Roman Cathedral and Bishop's Palace; but we lingered longest in the Alameda—that beautiful promenade—which is eighty feet wide, and is bordered by rows of orange and oleander trees, and in the centre of which a magnificent marble fountain was tossing its sparkling waters into the starry sky.

Here we saw some bright-eyed Spanish women in their dark mantillas and veils, and not a few in the homely and assuredly less graceful bonnet and shawl of London and Paris, whose fashions are gradually, and, I think, unfortunately, superseding the more captivating dress of old Spain; we saw too, ferocious-looking soldiers in dark dresses, wearing yellow sashes, red forage caps, and enormous moustaches; old priests gliding stealthily along, with an aspect of meekness, and apparently crushed in spirit; for the Government presses with a heavy hand on the ecclesiastics; citizens clad in light stuffs of bright colours, with red sashes and low-crowned hats, having black silk tufts at each side; queer-looking Caballeros

in large brown cloaks like that of Don Diego de Mendoza's "Poor Hidalgo," and wearing hats 'à la Kosuth.' As every man was smoking as if his salvation depended upon his doing so with vigour, the whole air was redolent of cigars.

I had on my undress, a forage cap, and plain red jacket, with tartan trews, my sash and dirk; for I have found that the British uniform always ensures the wearer attention and respect in every part of the globe.

We wandered long in that lovely Alameda, until the last of its fair promenaders had withdrawn; and then we returned to our hotel rather disappointed, that of all the black eyes we had seen flashing under veils of Madeira lace, not one had given us a glance of encouragement; that of all the pretty lips, which had been lisping duleet Spanish mixed with the Arabic of Granada, none had invited us to follow; that of all the sombre cavaliers, not one appeared to be an assassin or a Grand Inquisitor; and that, of all the hideous old duennas whom we had seen cruising about us, not one had approached, and with finger on her lip, and an impressive glance in her eye, placed a mysterious note into either of our hands, and "disappeared in the crowd."

Nothing remarkable happened, save that Hall had his pocket picked of his handkerchief and cigar-case, and we returned like other men to our hotel, where we supped on devilled turkey and the wine of the district, Tierno and Malaga; after which we turned into bed, warning the waiter to summon us early, and have a guide to lead us toward the neighbouring hills, where we intended to make some havock among the game next day.

Punctually at five o'clock in the morning the mozo-de-cafe roused us, and, after coffee, we shouldered our double-barrelled rifles, and accompanied by a young 'gamin' named Pedrillo, for whose fidelity the waiter pledged his "honour," we departed on our ramble.

If ever you saw the Spanish beggar-boys, as depicted by Murillo in his famous picture, which is now in Dulwich College, they will know perfectly the aspect of Pedrillo, our little guide.

He was about twelve years old; but, hardened by indigence and sharpened by privation, his perceptive faculties were keener than those of many a man. His sallow little visage was stamped with more of the animal than the intellectual being; his eyes were black, glossy, and glittered alternately with cunning and intelligence. His sole attire consisted of a dilapidated shirt, a pair of knee-breeches, and a cowl, which confined his luxuriant black hair; he had zinc rings in his ears, and bore altogether the aspect of a little Lazzaroné.

He was intelligent withal, and he told us a vast number of anecdotes, which increased in wonder and ferocity as we paid him one peseta after another; but he dwelt particularly on the achievements of a certain Juan Roa, otherwise styled de Antequera, who was then prowling in that savage range of mountains, from whence he descended sometimes alone, sometimes with many followers, especially when the Solano blew from Africa, to commit outrages among the quiet quintas and villages of the fertile Vega, where he was said to be in league with every posada-keeper for forty miles around Malaga.

About mid-day we rested under the cool shadow of a cork wood, about ten miles from the city; it was a beautiful place, where the sward was soft as velvet, and where a thick border of blushing rose-trees, and wild hydrangias flourished near us. Here we shared our provisions with a paisano and two armed contrabandistas whom we met, and who shared with us their wine in return. The two smugglers had strong and active horses, and carried blunderbusses and pistols to guard their bales of chocolate, soap, tobacco, and cigars; they were fine, merry fellows, gaudily dressed, and full of fun and anecdote; for in Spain the con-

trabandista is a species of travelling newspaper. Now all their news were of the last feat or outrage of Juan Roa.

"I would give a guinea to meet this interesting vagabond; the interview would tell famously in some of the monthlies," said Hall, with a heedless laugh.

"I think I should know him," said I; "for we saw at least twenty coloured prints of him in the shops on the Alameda, last night. He is a ferocious-looking dog!"

The contrabandistas looked round with alarm, and then laughed immoderately.

"Ferocious? Indeed, señor?" said the paisano; "I beg to differ from you, having myself seen Juan of Antequera face to face; and so think him quite like other men."

I gazed at the speaker, whom, by his green velvet jacket, adorned by four dozen of brass buttons, his sombrero, with its broad yellow ribband, his black plush breeches, red scarf and shoe-buckles, I supposed to be the substantial farmer of one of the adjacent quintas. He had a fine dark face, a powerful figure, and two black eyes that seemed to be always looking through me. Over one eyebrow, he had a large black patch. He carried a riding switch, had a knife in his girdle; and altogether, as he lolled on the sward, smoking a paper cigar and sipping red wine, I thought he would make a fine and striking sketch, and equal to any by Pinelli.

"Juan Roa," said he, "has committed great outrages in the Vega of Granada. The Duke of Wellington has there an estate, having on it about three hundred tenants, who yield some fifteen thousand dollars of rental; but Juan has thrice drawn every duro of it from the old abagado, who acts as steward to the duke."

The contrabandistas again laughed at this immoderately

"You have seen this Juan of Antequera, have you not?" said I.

"Face to face—often, señor."

"And so have I," said little Pedrillo.

"You! and when was this, my little fellow?" said Jack Hall.

"On the night old Barradas, the muleteer, was murdered."

The Spaniard with the patch knit his brows.

"Caramba!" said he; "ah! I remember that."

"Tell us about this murder," said Hall.

"You must know, señors," said Pedrillo, "that at the foot of the Sierra de Mija, about five miles from this, there stands a wayside inn, called La Posada del Cavallo, for the keeper, Martin Secco, had a great horse painted on his signboard. This man is the uncle of Juan Roa, or of Antequera. He has a wife, and had two daughters. The place is lonely; and it often happens, that those who put up there for the night forget the right path; for they are lost among the mountains, or fall into the sand-pits—at least, they are seldom heard of after. You understand, señors?"

The Spaniard with the patch smiled grimly, and played with his knife.

"One night last year, I guided Pedro Barradas, the Cordovan muleteer, to the posada, when it was dark as pitch. Pedro was very old, and half blind, and had never been that way before. A storm came on, and he desired me to remain with him, saying he would pay me well; old Barradas was rich; he had made money in the war of independence, and in the last civil war between the Carlists and Christinos; and had given three silver images to the church of his native puebla in Jaen.

"We supped on baccallao, raisins, and plain bread, for the season was Lent. While we were at supper, in the common hall of the posada, I heard the rain pattering on the wooden shutters (there is not a glass

window in the house); I heard the thunder grumbling among the hills, and the wind howling as it swept over the fields and vineyards of the Vega. It was a lonely place for a poor boy who had neither father nor mother, señors; but, then, I was not worth killing, though many fears flitted through my mind; for Martin's wife—an ugly and wicked-looking Basque provincial—put some very alarming questions to old Pedro Barradas. She told him that the neighbourhood was infested by bandidos and contrabandistas; and asked if he was a heavy sleeper.

“‘No,’ said Barradas, ‘in the war against Joseph Buonaparte I learned the art of sleeping lightly.’

“‘But what will you do if attacked?’

“‘That is as may be; but I have only twenty duros, and so shall sleep soundly enough.’

“These questions alarmed me very much; visions of murder and slaughter came before me. I crept close to Barradas, who, as I have said, was very old and very frail; but his presence seemed a protection to me for a time.

“When the hour for bed arrived, we, who were the only guests, were somewhat imperatively requested to retire to our rooms by the wife of Martin Secco.

“Barradas saw, perhaps, his danger, and said that I should sleep in the same room with him.

“But Inez Secco told him roughly that he must be content to sleep alone. Then the poor old man was half-led and half-dragged away. As for me, I was but a boy; so they thrust me into a dark closet, where some straw lay on the floor, and, desiring me to sleep there and be thankful, left me.

“I lay down on the straw, and finding it wet, arose in horror, fearing that it was blood; and so I remained in the dark, praying to our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, and trembling and listening to the howling of the storm for more than an hour, when all the other sounds in that terrible posada died away.

“I was just beginning to dose when a ray of light

streamed through the keyhole of my door; I heard it opened, and lo! Martin's wife, Inez Secco, appeared with a long and sharp cuchillo in her hand. A man accompanied her. He was Juan Roa de Antequera! Terror paralysed me; and she believed me to be asleep, for she felt all over my clothes—that is, my poor shirt and breeches-pockets, from which she took two quarter-duros—all I possessed in this world; and then, passing the light thrice across my face, to assure herself that I slept, the hag went away muttering—

“‘Caramba! only a half-duro; this little wretch is neither worth lodging nor killing.’

“Immediately after this I heard them whispering with Martin Secco; and then they knocked at the door of old Pedro Barradas, who, like a cautious man, had fastened it on the inside.

“‘Get up,’ said they, ‘Señor Barradas—get up—you are wanted.’

“But old Barradas either slept like a top, or he was too wary to open; for he heeded them not.

“Then I heard Juan and Martin muttering curses as they deliberately forced open the door; next there came a terrible cry of—

“‘Help! Pedrillo, help! Ayuda, por amor de neustra Senora Santissima!’

“This was followed by sounds like those made by a sheep when the knife of the carnicero is in its throat; and, in the meantime, Martin's two daughters were singing as loud as they could, and dancing a bolero in the passage, to conceal these terrible sounds, which froze the blood within me.”

Here Pedrillo paused.

“Go on,” said Jack Hall, impatiently; “and how did you escape?”

“If the noble señors would help me to refresh my memory——”

“Ah, I comprehend,” said I, tossing a peseta to him; “now fire away, Pedrillo.”

"You should not encourage this young picaro, Señor Caballero," said the Spaniard, whose face was now darkened by a terrible frown; "for it is my belief that he was the mere decoy, who led poor old Pedro Barradas to that villanous posada."

Instead of being angry, Pedrillo lifted up his hands, and prayed that Heaven and our Lady of the Seven Sorrows would forgive the speaker for his vile suspicions.

"I never closed an eye that night. In the morning I was told by Inez the Patrona, that old Barradas had departed across the hills of Antequera without me. Martin Secco asked me how I had slept? I said, like a dormouse; and as soon as I was free, I ran like a hare back to Malaga; and to make up for the loss of my last night's rest, slept like a torpedo under the trees of the Alameda."

"You acquainted the magistrates—the alguazils, of course," said Hall, knocking the ashes from his third cigar.

"I was only a poor, ragged, little picaro," replied Pedrillo, in a whining voice; "and who would believe me? Besides, old Barradas was a stranger from Cordova or Jaen; and a man, more or less, is nothing in Granada: but since that time Martin's two daughters have been sent to the galleys at Barcelona, by the captain-general of the kingdom, for intriguing in many ways with the contrabandistas of Jaen. Now, señors, the noon is past; and if it please you, 't is time we were moving, if you wish to reach the Sierra."

While we were placing fresh caps on our rifles, and preparing to start, the Spaniard with the patch, who had listened to Pedrillo's story with great impatience, now seized that young gamin by the arm, and grasping it like a vice, gave him a savage scowl, and said something in Spanish; but so rapidly, that I could only make out that he was reprehending him severely for telling us "a succession of falsehoods."

So I thought at that time; afterwards I was enabled to put a different construction upon his indignation, at which Pedrillo seemed to be considerably alarmed.

Bidding adieu to him and the contrabandistas, we departed under Pedrillo's guidance, and (sans leave) shot all along the sides of the mountain range, on the slope of which stands the small but ancient city of Antequera, so noted for the revolt of the Moors in the sixteenth century; and had some narrow escapes from falling into those remarkable pits, where the water settles in the low places, and is formed into salt by the mere heat of the sun.

We did not see much game, but knocked over a few brace of birds, and with these, and two red foxes, our little guide Pedrillo was quite laden. So he seemed to think; for, taking advantage of the concealment afforded him by some olive groves, and the scattered remnants of an abandoned vineyard, among which we had become entangled, the young rogue slipped away with our game and made off, either towards Malaga or Antequera; at least we saw no more of him, or of his burden at that time.

This was just about the close of the day, when Hall and I were draining the last drop of our flask, and surveying from the mountain slope the magnificent prospect of the verdant Vega, spreading at our feet like a brightly-tinted map, having that warm and roseate glow, which well might win it the name of Tierra Caliente. Malaga, the ancient bulwark of Spain against Africa, was shining in the distance, with its towers and gates, its flat-roofed houses, and vast cathedral; its Moorish castles and gothic spires, all bathed in a warm and sunny yellow; while beyond lay the broad blue Mediterranean, dotted by sails, and changing from gold to purple and to blue.

This was all very fine; but our pleasure was lessened by the conviction that our little rascal Pedrillo was absconding with our game; and we

knew that it would never do to relate to the gun-room mess how we had been outwitted, on returning to the Blonde next day.

The foreground of this beautiful panorama was broken by innumerable small hillocks and clumps of wood of many kinds; but principally olive, pine, and cork trees, that grew on the slope of the great Sierra; and though the sky and landscape darkened fast after the sun set, we instituted a strict and angry search for Pedrillo, shouting and whistling as we stumbled on, we knew not very well whither, looking for our lost spoils—two foxes, with gallant brushes, and eight brace of birds.

No moon had risen: the wind began to whistle among the groves and hollows; the night was very dark.

"What, if we should meet Master Juan of Antequera?" said I.

"If he had our game, I should be very well pleased," replied Hall; "but I wish that Pedrillo had been with old Scratch when we hired him yesterday. If I had the little lubber on board the Blonde, I would show him the maintop."

"Spain is a land of mishaps and events," said I.

"Yesterday we were wishing for an adventure."

"And to-night we have one with a vengeance!" said I.

"Belay; I see some one moving in that hollow. Let us jump down—ahoy below there!"

"But we may lose the track," I urged.

"True; so do you remain where you are, while I go down into the hollow. Hollo now and then, to let me know your whereabouts."

With his rifle in his hand, Hall, who was a fine active fellow, sprang down into a ravine that suddenly yawned before us, and I remained with my rifle cocked, and stooped low to watch what might follow. Hall disappeared in the obscurity below. I halloed; but the night wind tossed back my own

shout upon me. Then I thought I heard his voice, and sprang after him; but fell upon a point of rock, and sank, completely stunned, to the earth.

There I lay for nearly a quarter of an hour, unable to move, or rally my senses. When I arose, I found myself at the bottom of the hollow, and upon a narrow mule track; the moon was rising brightly at the south end of the ravine, silvering the masses of rocks, tufts of laurel-trees, and wild vines that grew in the clefts of the basalt. I shouted, but received no reply; and after a long and fruitless search could discover no trace of Hall in any direction.

Considerably alarmed for his safety as well as my own—for to lie at night upon those hills of Antequera, with the devilish stories of Pedrillo and the contra-bandistas haunting one's memory, was anything but pleasant—I tried the charges of my rifle, looked again to the percussion-caps, and set off in that direction where, by the rising of the moon, I knew that Malaga must lie; but frequently paused to holler for Jack Hall, and received no reply save the echoes of the rocks.

The ravine descended and grew more open. Again I saw the Vega sleeping at my feet in the haze; and, on turning an angle of the road, found myself close to an inn or taberna, which I approached with joy, concluding that my friend Jack must have gone that way, and would probably be there.

Like all Spanish inns, it was a large and mis-shapen edifice, the lower story of which was nothing better than a great open shed, for mules and vehicles; and, ascending from thence by a stair, I reached a gallery, at the door of which I was received by the host, who carried in his hand a stable lantern.

"Entrar," said he, bowing profoundly; "entrar, señor."

"I have been shooting on the mountains," said I, "and have lost my companion, a British naval officer, Has he passed this way?"

"No, señor," replied the host, (whose face I could not yet see,) as he led me up another stair.

"Then get supper prepared; for he must soon be here, as I have no doubt he knows pretty well the direction of Malaga. And now," said I, drawing a long breath, as I seated myself, what place is this?"

"La Posada del Cavallo." (!)

"Eh! ah—and you?" I asked, in a thick voice.

"Martin Secco, at your service, Señor Caballero!"

"Here was a dénouement!"

"Good Heavens!" thought I, mechanically resuming my rifle; "if the stories of Pedrillo should be true."

I scrutinised my host and hostess.

Martin had a broad and open visage, with keen eyes, and a black beard as thick as a horse-brush; a wide mouth, that frequently expanded in grins; but in those grins no radiance ever lit up his glassy eyes. The mouth laughed; but they remained immovable—invariably a bad sign. His forehead receded, and his ears were placed high upon his head. At the first glance, I concluded that my señor patron was an unmitigated brute. His figure was somewhat portly, and encased in a brown jacket, brown knee-breeches, and black stockings; he wore his hair confined in a caul, and had a yellow sash round his waist.

His wife was, as Pedrillo had described Inez Secco, a Basque, for her Spanish was almost unintelligible; and her coarse black hair was plaited in one thick tail, which reached to her heels. Her gown was of rough red cloth, with tight sleeves and a short skirt, displaying a pair of yellow worsted stockings and leather sandals, fastened by thongs above the ankle. Her face was coarse and bloated; but the expression of her eye was terrible. It hovered between the bright ferocious glare of a snake, and the glazed orb of an arrant sot. She scanned me closely; and I thought the old devil (she was a Spanish woman, and past forty,) was accurately appraising the value of all I had on.

"Well, señora patrona," said I, "what can I have for supper?"

"The señor has come at a bad time, for we have little or no provisions in our larder." (The larder of every Spanish inn has been in the same condition since the days of Cervantes and Gongora.) "For now this road between Malaga and Antequera is but little frequented after noon-day, owing to the terrible robberies and the four assassinations committed by Juan Roa, during the last Solano. Caramba! 't is very hard that we should suffer for him."

"What can I have, then?"

"A roasted galina, dressed with a few beans," said the patrona.

"And a glass of good aquadiente," added the host; "our Tierno has soured in the wine-skins."

"'T is poor fare this, for hungry men. I have said that I expect my friend's arrival momentarily."

The host gave a cold smile, and said, "We have had nothing ourselves, for a week past, but Indian corn and boiled garbanzos (beans); but the best we have is at the disposal of the señor caballero."

The inn was old and crazy; the wind came in at one cranny, and whistled out by another. The roof, walls, and floor of the large apartment in which we three were seated, consisted of a multitude of beams and boards, placed horizontally and diagonally, without skill and without regard to design or appearance. There was but one candle in the house (as the host assured me), and it was rapidly guttering down in the currents of air. The patrona transferred it from the lantern to an iron holder, and it was placed on the table to light the room and my supper.

An ostler, or nondescript servant, wearing fustian knee-breeches, without braces, with a muleteer's embroidered shirt, and having a yellow handkerchief tied round his head, spread a (not over-clean) cloth on the table; knives, forks, and covers were laid for two, with a cold fowl, a loaf of white bread, a dish of beans, garlic, and a bottle of aquadiente.

I observed this wild-looking waiter frequently glancing at my rifle, and the jewelled dirk that dangled at my waist-belt; I became suspicious of everything.

"You are well armed, señor," said he.

"It is natural; for arms are my profession," said I.

I looked at my watch: the hands indicated eleven o'clock! Two hours had elapsed since Hall and I had separated; still there was no appearance of him. Twenty times I opened the shutters of the unglazed windows, and listened intently; but the night wind that swept down the dark ravine in the Sierra, brought neither shout nor footstep; so I resolved to sup, go to bed, and trust to daylight for discovering Jack, if he did not arrive at the posada before morning.

I had just concluded supper, when the last remains of the last candle in this solitary inn, sank into its iron socket, and left us in darkness; at least with no other light than the red wavering glow that came from the hearth, where a few roots of pine and corkwood smouldered beside the brown puchero, in which the amiable patrona had boiled the beans for my repast.

"Here is a pretty piece of business!" said Martin Secco; "we have not another candle were it to light a blessed altar; and the señor Caballero must go to bed in the dark."

"Heed not that, senor patron," said I; "for I am a soldier, as you may see, and am used to discomfort."

"T is well; for I am sure that the señor has experienced nothing but discomfort in our poor posada. When I am rich enough, señor, I hope to have an hotel in the Alameda; and then should the Caballero ever come to Malaga again, he will remember Martin Secco."

At this remark, I heard the patrona utter a low chuckling laugh; but whether at the prospect of the fine hotel, or the doubtful chances of my ever again visiting Malaga, I could not say.

"Now, señor patron," said I, rising and taking up my rifle, "I should like to reach the town betimes to-

morrow; so show me to my chamber, and should my friend arrive, fail not to call me."

"Will you not leave your gun here?" suggested the host.

"Thank you—no," said I, while my undefined suspicions grew stronger within me. "Do you lead the way, señor, and I shall follow. Good night, señora patrona."

"Bueno noche, señor," said she, stirring up the embers; and we separated.

To follow Martin was perhaps the most unpleasant part that I had yet acted; for I had to grope my way after him along a dark passage, about forty feet long, at the end of which he ushered me into a room, where there was no other light than that given by the moon, which shone through a small window glazed with little panes of coarse glass. Here he bade me "Bueno noche;" and, after many apologies for my miserable accommodation, left me.

The apartment was small. In one corner stood a French bed, having light-coloured curtains; this, with a basin-stand, two chairs and a mirror, made up the furniture. Like a true soldier, I turned to secure the door.

Destitute of lock or bolt: it had only a small thumb-latch!

Dismounting the ewer and basin, I placed the stand end-wise between the bed and the door, firmly fixing it, and thus forming a barricade, which none could force without awaking me. To make all sure, I again dropped the ramrod into each barrel of my rifle, passed a finger over the caps, unbuckled the belt at which my dirk dangled; and, without undressing, for every moment I expected to hear Jack Hall hallooing outside the house; in short, to be prepared for anything, I threw myself down on the coverlet, and weary and worn by a long day's ramble among the mountains, prepared to sleep.

For a long time a species of painful wakefulness

possessed me; the moans of the passing wind, the flapping of a loose board in the external gallery, the wavering shadows thrown by the moonlight on the damp and discoloured walls; even the ticking of my watch disturbed me, and kept me constantly thinking of poor Hall's unaccountable absence, with many a fear that he might have fallen into the hands of Juan of Antequera, and not a few reproaches for my having perhaps too easily relinquished my search for him.

These thoughts completely obliterated any sense of my own immediate danger; but I was about to drop asleep when something moist that oozed over my neck and face aroused me. I started, fully awake in a moment; and, passing a hand across my cheek, looked at it in the moonlight.

"Blood!" said I, springing off the bed, while a thrill ran through me. I had not been wounded or cut by my fall; then from whence came this terrible moisture? I examined the pillow, and found the lower part of it quite wet; I turned it, and lo! it was saturated with blood!

This was the reason, that Martin Secco had declined to give me a candle. My heart beat thick and fast; apprehension of something horrible came over me, and I remembered the stories of Pedrillo. I also recollected that I had some excellent Spanish cigar fusees, and tearing three or four blank leaves from my note book, I twisted them together, lit them, and surveyed the dingy chamber. The boards in front of the bed were marked by recent spots of blood; I raised the little fringe or curtain, and, guided by some terrible instinct, looked below, and saw—what?

Poor Jack Hall lying there in his naval uniform, with his epaulette torn off, and his throat literally cut from ear to ear!

He had found his way here before me, and been assassinated.

Almost paralysed, I continued for half a minute to

gaze at this terrible spectacle, till the paper burned down to my fingers and expired. I heard my heart beating; and my head spun round as I tightened my belt and grasped my loaded rifle. Before I could adopt any plan of operations, I heard a rustling and whispering in the passage near my door; and, looking through a crack in the panels, saw, within a yard of me, Martin Secco, bearing in one hand the rifle of my poor friend, and in the other a lighted candle, although he had made to me so many apologies, about two hours before, for not having another in the house. As he approached, he handed it to a boy, in whom I discovered Pedrillo; and then the light flashed upon two other men, in one of whom I recognised the ostler, and in the other, our acquaintance of the noon, with the patch on his face, and wearing the green velvet jacket and sombrero. This worthy had a pistol in one hand and a knife in the other. The patrona was also there, with her wolfish eyes and enormous Basque queue.

Outrage and assassination were impressed on the hard lines of all their cruel and savage visages; and I perceived at once that without a vigorous effort I was lost—that my life was forfeited; and all the anticipations of newspaper paragraphs, “a mysterious disappearance” in the “Times” and “Military Gazette,” flashed upon my mind. I had youth, a noble profession, many kind friends, my regiment, and home, with “the best of expectations,” as old dowagers say, on one hand; a horrible and sudden death—a lonely scene of unknown butchery, on the other!

I cocked the locks of my rifle, and resolutely removed the barricade from the door.

“Take time, Juan Roa,” said the patrona.

“Hold your tongue, old perra; I know well enough what I am doing,” growled the personage in green, whom I now knew to be that terrible outlaw, who since the Carlist war, had laughed at the carabineros and alguazils, and kept all Malaga, the Sierra de

Mija, and the Vega of Granada astir and in terror.

Including the patrona, and the treacherous young rascal Pedrillo, I had five desperate enemies, and only two bullets at their service.

"Let us prove whether the Inglese is asleep, before we enter," said the patron, knocking at the door gently, and placing the candle behind him.

"No answer—he is certainly asleep," whispered the patrona.

"Knock again," growled Juan Roa.

A smart blow was then given ; but still I made no reply. Then the patron applied his hand to the latch ; but before he could open the door, I fired right through the slender panels, and shot him dead by one bullet, knocking over the ostler by the other, which he received through his neck and shoulder.

Clubbing my rifle, I then rushed out ; and charging them in the smoke and confusion, dealt Juan Roa a tremendous blow with the butt end, which levelled him beside the two ruffians who lay bleeding in the narrow passage. Escaping a pistol shot from Juan, but receiving two desperate cuts from the termagant patrona and the wasp Pedrillo, I reached the end of the passage, sprang through the common hall, and found the outer door fastened. By main strength I tore it open, and reached the external gallery, over which I dropped, though it was fully twelve feet from the ground ; and, just as I did so, the boy Pedrillo fired one of Juan's pistols after me ; but I escaped it, and ran down the mountain slope, loading my rifle as I went, and driving a bullet home into each barrel.

Grey morning was spreading along the east, and the red flush of the coming sun was brightening behind the dark towers of Gibralfaro, and sparkling on the lattices of Malaga. The aromatic plants were putting forth their sweetest perfume, and the light foliage of the sugar-cane, the cotton plant, and the

citron tree, were shaking off the heavy dews of night. The air was clear and cool; after the toils of the past day, the sleepless night and its terrors, the fresh dewy atmosphere revived me, and, dashing down the lonely mountain-side, I reached a little puebla, and reported the whole affair to the officer who there commanded a party of the carabineros of Antequera.

A sergeant and twenty troopers galloped away to the posada, which they found completely deserted by all its living tenants; but they hung the body of the patron upon a tree, burned the house to the ground, and conveyed the mangled remains of poor Jack Hall to Malaga, where they were interred next day, with all the honours of war, in that corner of the Campo Santo which is appropriated for the burial of strangers; and there the marines of the Blonde fired three volleys over the grave, where as noble a heart as Her Majesty's service possessed was committed to the earth of Spain.

An hour's examination before a magistrate, who swore me across my sword as to the particulars, was all the judicial inquiry ever made; we sailed next day, and reached Portsmouth, after a fine run, and without any other mishaps; but I shall never forget that terrible night among the mountains of Antequera, Martin Secco, his wife's tail, and the horrors of La Posada del Cavallo.

Jack's adventure elicited a burst of applause, and was voted the story of the evening, notwithstanding the great spice of the miraculous and holy, which had seasoned the narrative of the Major Don Joaquim.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HALT IN A CORK WOOD

NEXT morning betimes we left the venta of Castellar where, overnight, we had spent so many pleasant hours. The Major Don Joaquim was very curious to know the object of our mission to Seville, of which he announced himself a well-known citizen; but we declined to state the reason of our visit in uniform to that far-famed city; neither did we mention that our business lay with no less a personage than the captain-general of Los Cuatros Reinos.

In a country like Spain, where the people are so jealous of their national honour and so revengeful, we did not conceive that it would be conducive to our safety to state that we were the identical officers whose affair with the guarda costa had caused so much heartburning for some weeks past, and so much correspondence between our governor and the minister Espartero; so, somewhat piqued by our reserve, the major gave us a formal bow, and clambered into the vehicle which was to convey him to Medina. We separated, the convoy of calessos got into motion after much noise and vociferation on the part of the drivers, the stable-boys, the hostalero, and the passengers, who were all gabbling at once in full-toned Spanish as they rolled away under the escort of a party of very ill-appointed dragoons in the service of Donna Isabella la Catolica, while we rode off in the opposite direction towards Alcala de los Gazules, a small town, which lies on the Seville road, and through which we passed soon after.

"Let us push on," said I, to interrupt Jack, who had been rallying me pretty smartly about Donna

Paulina, and vowing that all this affair of a trip to Seville had been foreseen and preconcerted by me for the purpose of meeting her again and continuing a flirtation which was a source of great merriment to the regiment. "Let us push on, Jack, for I feel very anxious——"

"To reach Seville, of course; but it won't run away; we shall find it in its proper place on the left bank of the Guadalquivir."

"You mistake me. I was thinking how awkward it would be for us if the Himalaya was to come round during our absence; and if on our return we should find the whole regiment embarked and steaming away for the Crimea."

"Awkward! I should think so, rather; but it is not likely they can decamp in such a hurry. After all we heard last night about the restless habits of the good people in these mountains, and their vague or peculiar ideas regarding property, together with the eccentricities of this Don Fabrique, do we not run a little risk in proceeding without an escort?"

"There is risk, certainly; but our return is not to be thought of till the duty is done."

"Of course not—what would the regiment say?"

"And what should we think of ourselves?"

"We are, I hope, a match for any six Spaniards, with our swords and revolvers, in fighting; and with these good nags under us I should think we are more than a match for them in flying. But the noon is becoming so hot that I propose we should halt under that grove of cork-trees and there take a siesta."

We halted accordingly at the base of a steep mountain chain, between the cleft peaks of which a noon-day-flood of yellow light was gushing. Sterile, abrupt, and bare above us rose the ridgy rocks: the little valley at the base was teeming with verdure and fertility, but it was silent and solitary, for not a sound was heard save the murmur of a stream which bubbled from a fissure in a vine-covered cliff. It meandered between meadows of aromatic plants, and

sought deep pools over which the oleander and the bay threw their branches, and the cool shady thickets of the dark wood of olive and cork-trees.

Just where we dismounted, we found a personage lounging on the grass. He was smoking a cigar, and had a long gun beside him. Without rising for a minute nearly, he scrutinised us and our horses with marked curiosity. His costume was somewhat gay, being in the highest style of the bull-ring, or that of a *majo* or dandified Spanish *ladron*, whose free aspect and gallant air make him the admiration of the dark-eyed *paisanas* and the envy of their more peaceful male relatives; for the *majo* is the bravo of our own time.

This personage wore an ample brown cloak, which hung loosely about his shoulders, a black velvet *sombrero*, with a large tuft of black plush on one side thereof, and under its deep rim his coal-black hair fell in heavy locks, and his flashing eyes watched all our motions, with an indescribable expression of stealth and suspicion. A long knife and a pair of brass-butted pistols were in his gaudy sash; he wore leathern gaiters, and was playing with the blade of a *navaja*, or clasp-knife, about ten inches long—a deadly instrument, which the Spaniard is never without, for therewith he cuts his ‘*carne*’ and bread, or his *bacallao* in Lent, slices his melon in summer, and slashes the face of any person with whom he may chance to differ in opinion. Indeed, the visage of this loungeer bore the very unmistakable mark of a long slash which had once laid it open from eye to chin. Beside him stood a beautiful Andalusian jennet, high of head, and bold in chest; its gaily-fringed bridle was thrown over the branch of an olive tree, and it was accoutred with a high-peaked saddle of antique form, covered by a piece of white sheepskin, which was spread also over a pair of holsters.

“Buenos dias, señor,” said I; “a good morning—I fear we are disturbing you.”

“Not at all, señores—the greensward, the shadow

of those trees, and the waters of this stream, flowing from yonder sierra, belong to us all in common. Sit down, señores, and halter your horses, as you see I have haltered mine. You belong to the Gibraltar garrison, I presume—right—you are Inglesos.”

“No, Brittanicos,” said I, with a smile.

“And whither go ye?”

“To Seville.”

“Ah, would I were going with you: it is a place of joy and merriment, Seville. The sun shines on it once every day of the year; yet I go there but seldom. Allow me to make you each a cigarillo.”

“With pleasure.”

To have declined would have been an affront as great as to refuse a proffered snuff-mull in the country of the clans. Our Spaniard produced one of those little books of soft blank paper (almost the only volumes used in Spain), and tore out three leaves; he then took tobacco from his silk pouch and made up three little cigars very neatly and adroitly; but twice during the operation I detected his stealthy eyes scanning us from under his bushy eyebrows.

My little box of patent lights excited his wonder and admiration, as he was about to exert his patience by having recourse to the antiquated flint and steel. Then Jack Slingsby produced his travelling flask; I brought forth mine, and the Spaniard had a capacious bota of wine, a drinking cup of leather, a piece of bacallao and biscuits; and we were just proceeding to lunch, when his Andalusian jennet pricked up its ears and neighed uneasily.

“*¡Madito!*” said our companion, as a scowl came over his visage and his hand fell mechanically on the lock of his gun; “some one approaches.”

“An old woman on a donkey, and nothing more,” said Slingsby, carelessly; “*amigo mio*, you look as much alarmed as if you expected the terrible *Fabrique de Urquija*, or *Juan Roa of Antequera*.”

The keen eyes of the Spaniard flashed, and he

looked at Jack as if he would have pierced him through.

"I fear neither Don Fabrique nor any other man," said he gruffly; "a woman on a burro—oh—it must be poor Sister Santa Veronica, of Estrelo, a town about a league distant."

"How is she named so?" I asked.

"After the blessed Santa Veronica who wiped the pale face of our Lord, when dying upon his cross," replied the Spaniard, lowering his head; "and as she did so, on her kerchief there became impressed the most wondrous of religious miracles—the Santa Faz—the holy countenance of Jaen, where it is still preserved in our cathedral, and from which the portraits of our Saviour are all taken; hence it is that his sad and upturned face, with its crown of bloody thorns and curling beard, and the long yellow hair parted over the smooth pale brow, are so well known over all the Christian world."

As he spoke, an elderly woman, habited like a nun, in a coarse and well-patched dress of black serge, with a hood of spotless white linen folded across her brow and chin, and having its long ends drooping lappetwise down her withered cheeks, rode up to us on a donkey, which displayed—what one seldom sees in a Spanish ass—evident signs of being ill-fed and ill-groomed. The nun, who had a careworn, grave, and, though stern, not unpleasing expression of face, carried a covered basket on her arm. Our companion sprang to his feet, and, doffing his sombreo, hastened to meet her and to hold the bridle of her animal.

She was abroad, as she told us, begging alms and food for the sisters of her convent—ten ladies—all of whom were of noble rank, but the most of whose kinsmen had fallen in battle under Don Ramor de Cabrera, and thus left them friendless. They were now, by the confiscation of the ecclesiastical revenues, and the seizure of those sums which they had paid as a dowry into the convent treasury, reduced to ex-

treme penury in their old age, and were driven from their pleasant convent in the beautiful vega of Jaen ; since then they had endeavoured to perform the duties of their order, and to serve God, in a poor and half-ruined house, which belonged to a noble, charitable, and religious lady, Donna Dominga de Lucena, y Colmenar de Orieja, at Estrelo ; and now would not the noble Caballeros give something to the poor ladies of Santa Theresa, however small, for the love of God and of blessed charity ?

All this, which she prettily told, was addressed to us, rather than to the stranger, at whom she glanced uneasily from time to time, although he stood bare-headed, with the deepest respect, and holding her burro by the bridle.

The circumstance of the sisterhood being befriended by the mother of Donna Paulina would have sufficed to interest us, if the wrong done them by the present Government of Spain had failed to do so. Our purses were at once produced, and we respectfully raised our caps on presenting the poor nun with a few pillared dollars, which no doubt she little expected from two heretical Brittanicos.

They had been robbed of everything, she continued—at least, all save their cases of reliques and the bones of Santa Theresa, which they had borne on their shoulders in sad procession from Jaen to Estrelo ; and, moreover, they had lost the wonderful portrait of their patroness, which had been seized and sold by those hijos de Luiz Philipe, the men of the new administration ; but it was no fault of the present Queen of Spain, for poor Isabella la Catolica had wept her eyes out in the cause of the poor monks and nuns. The señores had, no doubt, heard of the wonderful portrait of the blessed Theresa ?

In great sorrow we professed our ignorance thereof.

“Madre Mia ! It was said to be an Alonzo Cano, and had narrowly escaped the clutches of the Marshals Soult and Massena, when they swept away the

golden moidores of the Portuguese and the divine Murillos of the Spaniards. It belonged to the chapel in which the saint was baptized, and was quite as veritable and wonderful as the holy countenance of Jaen, and was usually placed over the great altar; but one day when the chapel was undergoing repair, it was placed at the porch, where it was seen by a certain ruined gamester—a savage and desperate fellow, worse than Juan Roa or Don Fabrique, as he came past that way. In a fit of mad despair, having just lost everything, he struck his dagger into the bosom of the picture, from which there immediately gushed out a torrent of blood in the sight of the terrified people; while a faint cry was heard in the air, as of one in pain afar off.”

“And the gamester?”

“Went raving mad and died, chained like a wild beast in the Caza de Locos of Jaen.”

To our gift, our companion added a doubloon, a present so valuable that it excited our surprise and kindled the fear of the poor nun, who accepted it with reluctance, and, with abundance of genuflections and thanks, whipped up her burro, which trotted away.

“Shall I not have the honour of escorting you to Estrelo, reverend señora?” cried our friend, hurrying after her.

“Muchos gratias—no, no! a thousand thanks, señor,” she replied, hurriedly; “no one will molest a poor sister of Santa Theresa.”

Her ill-concealed repugnance to receive his alms evidently impressed the Spaniard, who seated himself in silence, and smoked with a sullen expression, as if somewhat depressed by the whole affair; but Jack Slingsby, who hated silence more than anything in the world, began to make some casual inquiries as to whether or not the famous Urquija had been heard of hereabout, and where he was generally to be found.

“Found,” reiterated the Spaniard, with a frown of

surprise; "he is often found by those who least like such a discovery."

"So it seems," replied Jack, "and by the accounts we heard of him at the—how do you name it?—the venta last night, he seems to be ripe fruit for the gallows."

"Indeed," said the Spaniard, quietly making up another cigarillo, "you are very loud, Señor Viajador, (traveller), in condemning this poor son of Andalusia, this Don Fabrique; but you do so simply because you know nothing about him; being, like most Englishmen, totally ignorant of every country except your own portion of Britain, and, believing that whatever is not English must be radically, physically, and morally wrong, you have come among us predisposed to ridicule and to condemn."

"The deuce!" said Jack, with an air of pique; "I beg to assure you my, fine fellow, that I could tell you a story of a posada——"

"Enough, señor," replied the other, waving his hand with great dignity of manner, while a savage gleam shot over his stealthy eyes; "but allow me to inform you that a bandit—I do not mean a pitiful picaro who steals purses and pocket-handkerchiefs on the Prado, or a swindling raterillo who cheats at cards, but an armed robber (and here his hand struck the butt of his escopeta)—is a modern Spanish hero, and the pretty paisana and the bluff muleteer sing of his exploits in the same breath with those of Rodrigo de Bivar, the Cid Campeador, Hernando de Cordova, and the chiefs of the war of Independence, when we saw the fields of Vimiero, of Talavera and Rorica; lend a new lustre to the names of Mina, of Murillo, and of Wellington!"

"Very likely; but this Don Fabrique commits such devilish atrocities, and all that sort of thing," urged Jack, closing with his incessant phrase.

"Do you know why poor Fabrique took his gun and stiletto, and went to the mountains?"

“No.”

“Shall I tell you?”

“If you please.”

“Listen. There was an abogado, a lawyer of Jaen, named Jacop el Escribano, who married the aunt of Fabrique—an aunt who had been a mother to him after his own died, or rather was murdered by the Chapelgorri's. She tended him, reared him, loved and educated him at Alcala, and he was to be her heir, for she was rich, and had mines of quicksilver and cinnabar on the confines of Murcia; and her heir he had every right to be, for other kindred she had none. Well, this good aunt fell sick; those who were more than usually acute, or more than usually evil-minded, said that the abogado had poisoned her mentally and bodily. At all events he wrote out her will, which bequeathed all her property to himself, whom failing, to a certain Gil Jacop, his son by a former marriage, and to poor Fabrique, the son of her dead brother, not a peseta, not a pistareen! This limb of Satan and the law, succeeding in all his ends and objects, poisoned her ears against the poor student of Alcala. Well, the aunt died. Full of sorrow Fabrique hastened to his home to find the door of it shut in his face, and the malicious abogado in possession of everything, even to his aunt's snuff-box and armed chair. Our poor student rushed to the Alcalde, who heard him with a smile of incredulity—why? because he was the cousin of the abogado, and he, too, shut his door in the face of Fabrique. Bursting with indignation he sought the corregidor, to pour out anew the story of his wrongs; but, ay de mi! the corregidor, a Commander of the Knights of Calatrava, was to dine that day with the abogado, who had invited half the city to feast, and weekly gave a magnificent tertulia in the house of the dead woman.

“Fabrique lost all patience and, swore a dreadful vow of vengeance, so the wise, just, and most illustrious corregidor expelled him from the city, and by the alqua-

zils he was driven forth by the Audujar gate. His last money was in his pocket; so he bought a dagger and musket, and shaking the dust off his feet at the puerta de Audujar, he gathered together a band of gallant spirits who had followed Juan Roa, and betook himself to the mountains, leaving the abogado in possession of his aunt's house and her mines upon the Murcian frontier."

"And did he enjoy them long?" I asked.

The Spaniard smiled grimly, and took a long quaff of the bota.

"You wish to know, señor?"

"Exceedingly."

"Listen. A week after these events our abogado disappeared from Jaen, and no man knew whence he had gone, and few cared. A month after, a poor wretch, half crazed and in rags, emaciated, pale and hollow-cheeked by hunger, illness, agony, and wandering, and whose vision had been destroyed by the simple application of a red-hot ramrod, was found near a village of the Sierra de Ronda. It was Jacop el Escribano—whose scribbling was at an end, and whose eyes were closed on the world for ever."

"And his son, Gil Jacop?"

"Was found shot one fine morning at the corner of that road, just where you see a rough wooden cross, erected by the curate in memory of the affair, and to beg a prayer of every passer-by for the dead man's sinful soul. The corregidor has thrice been robbed of all he possessed—his rents, fees, and the revenue of his commanderie; and the alcalde has quite as often been beaten to the very verge of death. Evil-disposed people lay those things to the charge of Don Fabrique; but I say nothing, having no opinion on the subject."

"Then you are afraid of him?" said Jack, laughing.

"Afraid—ha, ha!" said the Spaniard, taking up his long gun; "no—not so much as you were afraid of

Juan Roa and Martin Secco, on that night in the 'Posada del Cavallo' at Malaga.

"How know you of that affair?" asked Jack, starting to his feet.

"Did I not hear it told at full length last night in the venta at Castellar?"

"Were you there?" I inquired, with surprise.

"You saw a goatherd present—an old fellow with a sheep-skin dress, a long beard, a crook, and bota."

"Yes."

"'T was I. Last night I was a goatherd, because it suited my purpose to appear so, and to laugh at the terror of those miserable soap-boilers on hearing the whistle of bullets in the Sierra; to day I am Fabrique de Urquija, the friend of poor Juan Roa; and had you been less kind to that poor nun than you were, it was my intention to have shot and robbed you both, which I could easily have done, despite your swords and revolvers, your English impudence and cool assurance. Vaya usted con Dios, and may you have a pleasant ride to Seville; but attend more to the rules of common politeness when next you speak of Urquija beyond the security of your own lines at Gibraltar. I am not a bad fellow, señores, at times; though more apt to take the advice of a curer of fish than a curer of souls in Lent."

With these words he leaped on his horse, and slinging his long gun by his right leg, galloped into the cork wood, and disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ALCALDE.

THIS rencontre, by illustrating the danger of lingering and of making chance acquaintance—dangers for which no credit would be given by the Horse Guards, and against which we found no hints afforded by our “John Murray”—caused us to hasten through Estrelo without paying a visit to the nuns of Santa Theresa, which (on the base of our acquaintance with Sister Veronica) we had proposed to do; and a ride of ten miles further, through a fruitful and beautiful district, brought us to the ancient ducal town of Medina Sidonia, where the Spanish commandant invited us to dinner, and where, finding ourselves in safe quarters, we spent a pleasant evening, and with cigars and Ciudad Real, Tresillo and Monte, whiled away the hours until we retired to our posada, where we slept undisturbed by rats or robbers, as quietly as if we had been in the best hotel in London.

We crossed a stream next day, and arrived at Arcos de la Frontierra, a picturesque little town, situated upon a lofty rock, almost insulated by the Guadalete, and so difficult of access on the south and west that we had some trouble in discovering an entrance to it anywhere.

The aspect of the place, with all its flat-roofed or red-tiled houses clustering on the summit of a steep and abrupt rock; its two large parish churches, with the square campanile of Santa Maria, and the façade of the palace of the reverend the vicar-general to the metropolitan of Seville, all lit up by the flush of a Spanish setting sun, and throwing a huge broad shadow across the girdling Guadalete, and that rich

undulating country which stretches far away beyond it, pleased me so much that, dismounting at the foot of the eminence, I seated myself among some fallen walls and prostrate columns—doubtless fragments of the ancient Arcobriga—to make a little sketch of the place.

Reclined against a mass of vine-covered ruin, Slingsby of "Ours" had fallen fast asleep with his horse's bridle buckled over his left arm, and both he and the nag occupied a prominent place in the foreground of my view, and a wayside cross, covered with rich creepers, and having a sulky-looking raven seated on its summit, was in the middle distance. My labours proceeded rapidly and greatly to my own satisfaction when they were suddenly interrupted by a heavy hand being roughly laid on my shoulder. I looked up. Four men, muffled in the inevitable, invariable, and eternal dirty brown cloak, in which we always see the mysterious characters stride, swagger, and swell on the boards of minor theatres, and which a Spaniard is never without, under any circumstances, appeared beside me. Two had drawn swords, and two cocked blunderbusses.

"The señores will understand that they are our prisoners?" said one.

"Who the deuce are you—comrades of Don Fabrique, I suppose?"

"Heaven forbid! we are honest men—alguazils of Arcos, and the Caballeros must both come before the *senor alcalde*."

"For what purpose?" I demanded hastily.

"The *senor* will soon be informed," said one.

"To his cost, perhaps," added a second.

"Vaya, come along," growled a third, "or it may be the worse for you."

Finding expostulation vain, I roused Jack, who after revolving in his own mind whether or not he ought to revolve them—for his pistol had six barrels, we took our horses by their bridles, and accompanied

the bravo-like alguazils, whose good-will we sought to cultivate by being liberal with our cases of che-roots.

The alcalde, a bustling little manufacturer of Cordovan leather, received us in his office, stuck his barnacles on his nose, summoned his escribano, and opened the case with an air of awful pomp and chilling consequence; but he seemed to be about as well qualified for the office of lawgiver as Mr. Justice Shallow.

"The señores, who seemed to be British officers belonging to the garrison of Gibraltar, of which her Most Catholic Majesty Donna Isabella is sovereign, whatever Queen Victoria may assert to the contrary, were found making a sketch—a military sketch, no doubt—of her ancient city of Arcos, in the province of Andalusia; and the señores, of course, knew the law framed by the Cortes on that point."

"Of sketching the city of Arcos?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Any city," returned the fussy little alcalde.

"But this is not a fortified town."

"But it might be fortified."

"No doubt—but it is not fortified at the present moment."

"Tonto de mi! what does that matter?"

"Why you stupid old ——" Jack Slingsby was beginning, but I placed a hand upon his mouth, and the irritable little alcalde continued.

"For what purpose was the sketch—this sketch made?—answer me that, señor."

"To please myself and to show my friends."

"Of course, a likely story truly," he sneered, as he deliberately tore my poor production into several pieces, threw them into the brassero of charcoal which glowed in the centre of the apartment, and watched until every fragment was entirely consumed. I gazed at him in silence, but feeling an emotion of

considerable disgust; for although well aware that to sketch any fortified place or garrison town, barrack, or citadel, was strictly forbidden, it never occurred to me that the restriction could apply to the miserable conglomeration of Spanish huts and crumbling Moorish hovels which clustered round the churches on the rock of Arcos; but in their ignorance of the arts the Spaniards, like the Turks, cannot see a difference between a little artistic sketch and a regular plan drawn for the most desperate military purposes.

"So we are suspected of being spies," said Slingsby; "I am glad that sketching was omitted in my education, and that I never could draw aught but a cork or a bill in my life."

"But this may prove no matter for laughter, Jack," said I, as the *alcalde*, with awful gravity, after duly entering our names and designations in a huge tome, turned to another part thereof, wiped his spectacles and addressed us. I must own to feeling some uneasiness, having once had a brother officer who went on sick leave to Cadiz, where he was shot as a *Christino* priest; he was our senior lieutenant, poor Bob Rasper, and was as much like a priest as the great *Mogul*. I had an uncle who was very near being strangled by an *alcalde*, who was persuaded he was Don Carlos; and we all know that Lord Carnarvon was well nigh murdered in mistake for Don Miguel, while Captain Widrington was about to be garotted by another official, who thought he might be an agent of Marshal Baldomero Espartero, now first minister of Donna Isabella II. These instances of Spanish justice, clearness, and legal acumen were floating before me when the little ruffian of an *alcalde* curled up his mustachios and said,—

"The señores will have passports, no doubt?"

"No passports," I replied.

"Demonio!" ejaculated this Andalusian Solon, while the *alguazils* (having finished their cheroots)

began to clank their sabres and cock their ominous-looking trabujos. "Then you must both be sent to prison in irons, and kept under guard until we communicate with Espartero."

We lost alike our patience and temper at this piece of intelligence.

"Beware, señor alcalde," said I, "for the very person you have named may send you to the galleys for this insolent interference. We are two British officers going on public duty to Seville, and being passed through the Spanish lines by the officer commanding there, require no other passports than our swords and our uniform, which you had better respect, or we may play a mischief with you. Our ambassador at Madrid——"

"Vaya usted á los infernos!" exclaimed the alcalde, in a towering fit of official indignation; "I shall show you how we treat those who enter our city of Arcos without proper credentials, and I verily believe you to be a couple of pitiful raterillos. Search and secure them!"

How this affair might have ended, I have no means of knowing; but nothing saved us from much trouble and perhaps danger, but the sudden discovery of a letter, which was found by one of the alguazils who rudely plunged a hand into one of my pockets. It was addressed in high-flowing terms to the most illustrious señor, the captain general of Andalusia, and bore the great official seal of the Governor of Her Britannic Majesty's garrison of Gibraltar. On beholding this, the countenance of the alcalde fell. This human bladder, which was inflated by so much wrath and Jack-in-office pride, suddenly collapsed. His manner changed at once; he was profuse in his apologies, and on a wave of his hand, those alguazils who, a moment before, were ready to drag us to some foul prison and rudely too, like ruffians as they doubtless were, slunk aside and withdrew; and in five minutes after we were mounted, clear of Arcos, and trotting

along the road which ascended from the banks of the Guadalete.

"Those Spaniards will never change," said Jack; "they will ever be bullies or cravens; so cudgels or cannon shot are the only means of argument with them."

We then laughed at the whole affair—at the absurd pomposity of the alcalde, and the idea of our being arrested as spies.

At a trot we traversed the little town of Alcantarilla. It lies not far from the Guadalquivir, a stream that wanders through a fertile hollow, which in the days of the Cæsars was a hopeless march. We crossed the bridge which was built by the hands of the Romans, who placed a tower at each end for defence. Slingsby, with a waggish smile, recommended me to make a sketch of these interesting remains; but a wholesome terror of the alcalde of Arcos was yet too fresh in my mind, so we pushed on towards Los Palacios, in company with a long train of mules from the seaport of San Lucar de Barameda. Their drivers were gaily attired, and were all sturdy and hearty fellows, who beguiled the way with stories, laughter, and songs of love and wine, or legends of the Avalos, the Moors of Ronda, and of Bravonnel the Moor of Zaragoza and his ladylove Guadalara, while they sung to the cracking of their whips, the merry jangle of the mule-bells, and the thrum of a guitar. With all this, they were prepared for every emergency, having poniards, blunderbusses, and other weapons—being armed to the teeth, in fact; and with them we travelled until Seville rose before us, with the fretted spires and gothic pinnacles of its cathedral and Alcazar, and the gigantic tower of La Giralda, rising above the domes of the Mohammedan times and the befrays of the Christians; and all steeped in the unclouded blaze of an Andalusian sunset, with the Guadalquivir winding through a low valley in the foreground, bordered by groves of the orange and citron, and the

green undulating ridges of the Sierra towering in the distance, with a golden vapour resting on the mellowed peaks, which bound a landscape that, in the days of Alfonso the Wise, was studded by a hundred thousand cottages and oil-mills.

But the Guadalquivir seemed as muddy as the Thames, where it approaches the ancient fane of St. John of Alfarache, and there its turgid tide was lashed and beaten by the steamers from San Lucar; and we could see them ploughing their way (with red lights hanging at their fore cross-trees) into the evening haze that settled over Seville.

Our passports were demanded by the officer commanding an ill-accounted guard at the gate; but our letter addressed to the captain general freed us from further question, and he politely directed us to an hotel.

We rode through the grass-grown streets of the lazy Sevillanos, I reflecting on stories of Pedro the Cruel and the past glories of the Arab city—Jack Slingsby reflecting on the thoroughfares, which he said “were remarkably dingy, devilish dirty, and all that sort of thing,” until we discovered the hotel de la Reyna near the Lonja, or Exchange, and close to the far-famed cathedral church. There we took up our quarters for the night.

“At last we are in Seville!” said I, as I threw myself into a down fauteuil, after tossing off a glass of iced Valdepenas, and flung aside the last week’s Madrid papers, the ‘Heraldo’ and ‘España;’ “in Seville, where Trajan, Adrian, and Theodosius were born, and where——”

“You shall flirt with the pretty Paulina to-morrow,” said Jack; “pass over the decanter; thanks; I can take you off your stilts in a twinkling, my boy.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE TERTULIA.

IN the morning, after coffee, a devilled bone and a cigar, we sallied forth to deliver the dispatch of our Governor to the captain general, and resolved, soon after, to bid farewell to Seville; for Jack was full of fears that the whole corps would be off, bag and baggage, to fight the Russians before we could return. The hour was somewhat early, so we rambled about the beautiful city; but I do not mean to inflict upon the reader a description of all we saw—of the gay crowds who thronged the Plaza de Toros and the Alameda, with fan and mantilla, sombrero and mantle; of the cathedral of Santa Maria, with its carved buttresses and stupendous spires; of the Alcazar or palace of the Moorish kings, with all its arabesques and oval arches; of the Lonja and the huge tobacco factory. I beg my reader to imagine them all, for I could easily devote five several chapters to describing these five several edifices. It is enough that the Sevillanos have an ancient proverb, that he who never saw Seville has never seen a wonder; to wit—

“Que en no ha visto Sevilla,
Ne ha visto Maravilla.”

As we issued from the cathedral, Jack's loquacity was somewhat stilled by the grandeur of that stupendous pile and its dark Murillos, the chief of which is the adoration of the Saviour by St. Anthony of Padua—I beg pardon—of Lisbon and of Lagos—and full of thoughts, which were rather solemn for such fellows as we are, we walked slowly on with our eyes fixed on the far-famed tower of the weathercock

—the Giralda—which rises at the north-east angle of the church, when a personage, whose eyes were raised to the same altitude, came somewhat violently against us, and then we poured forth mutual apologies.

“Maldito—come esta, señores; well met.”

“Come esta, señor major—who would have thought of meeting you here?”

“Why so?” asked Don Joaquim, for he proved to be our friend of the noble regiment of Lagos; “I think that I mentioned Seville as my native city—so you have reached the end of your journey?”

“Yes, and mean to leave this to-morrow,” said Jack.

“So early! Maldito—a short visit. Is your business so soon concluded?”

“It is not yet begun; we have a dispatch for the captain general.”

“Indeed!” said he, with wonder in his face.

“Where is his palace? We were just about to inquire the way.”

“You must pass the Lonja, our famous Exchange, a triumph of the genius of Juan de Herrera—the architect of the Escorial; well, you must pass it, and cross the Plaza de Toros; but allow me to have the pleasure of escorting you.”

“Many thanks.”

“None are necessary, señores—but this dispatch for the captain general—Maldito! I am bursting with irrepressible curiosity to know what it is about. Are we going to war with Russia too?”

“Then, señor,” said I, “we may as well inform you that it concerns the killing of a man on board of a Spanish government guarda costa, by a chance shot from the Mole Fort at Gibraltar.”

“He was in pursuit of a contrabandista, I presume?”

“Exactly so.”

“Ah, those rascally contrabandistas! It is too bad of your Government to protect them—quite as bad as

making war on the Chinese because they would not poison themselves with opium. I heard that some of your people had shot at a guarda costa, and killed some one on board. It has excited considerable animosity, and been much spoken of."

He led us through several dark and narrow streets, so narrow, indeed, that people could easily have shaken hands from the windows on each side of these quaint old Moorish thoroughfares. Issuing suddenly into the full blaze of the scorching Spanish sunshine, we found ourselves before a handsome palace decorated by Corinthian pilasters, and having its lofty windows covered by external shades of brilliant red and white striped stuff. Two sentinels of the line stood at the portal under sunshades, with their muskets "ordered;" and they stared at our uniform with black and lack-lustre eyes.

"The palace of the captain general," said Don Joaquim, bowing; "he has just returned from Jaen, having gone on a pilgrimage to the Holy Face."

"We must have the pleasure of meeting you again," said I.

"Our hotel is the Queen's—de la Reyna—near the Exchange," added Slingsby.

"Oh, I know the place very well," replied the Don, producing his card, a token of civilisation little known in Spain; "my mother gives a tertulia to-night, and we shall be delighted to see you—her reception hour is eight—Donna Dominga de Lucena—Calle del Alcazar."

"You are the son of Donna Dominga, whom we had the pleasure of knowing in Gibraltar?"

"The same, señores. Are you the gentlemen who were so kind and attentive to her? It is quite a little romance this meeting. How odd, to think that we sat a whole night in the venta of Castellar and knew nothing about this! Then, doubtless, one of you must be that accomplished cavalier, Don Leja Mag

Leja, concerning whom she wrote me so many letters when I was at Lagos."

With some laughter, we professed that neither of us was the portly Leechy Mac Leechy, to whose name the Donna had given somewhat of a Castilian character in her epistles to the major.

"But about the tertulia? we have no full uniform," urged Jack.

"Full uniform—bagatella!—stuff—come just as you are; but as your business here is about that unlucky guarda costa, 't is as well my brother Hernan has not arrived; for he is in our naval service, and might feel piqued on the subject. Well, addio—I shall see you at eight to-night—don't forget, the street of the Alcazar," and with a salute he left us.

The sentinels at the door "handled" their arms as we ascended the flight of marble steps which led to the door of the captain general's palace.

"The last general officer with whom I had the honour of an interview was old Towler, of the Kilkenney district," said Slingsby; "I have no idea what manner of man our Spaniard may be."

As the interview with the captain-general and all the various pros and cons thereanent—as a Scotsman would say—may have appeared already among the public intelligence of "our own correspondent," who most likely was not in Seville, and knew nothing about the matter, I will only state that we were received with great urbanity and politeness by the Spanish officer who held the important post of Governor of the four kingdoms. He was a fine old cavalier, and in earlier years had served in the Peninsular war; he told us that he had commanded a regiment under Cuesta; a brigade of Cazadores under Hill, and a division under Murillo; that he had been wounded at Vittoria in attacking the heights of La Puebla, and had received the Grand Cross of the Bath from the hand of the Duke of Wellington, and latterly the Order of Carlos III., which devoted him

"to the pure conception of the blessed Virgin Mary," from the Queen and the Patriarch of the Indies, at the solemn chapter held in 1853. The old fellow's eyes kindled with pleasure as he invited us to lunch, and to share with him a bottle of choice Valdepenas, saying that he loved the sight of the red coat for the memory of the olden time that would never come again—the poor red coats—he had often seen them lying thick enough on many a Spanish plain, and in many a crumbling breach and trench—at Badajoz, at Ciudad Rodrigo, San Sebastian and Tarifa.

Here, at least, was one noble old Spanish soldier—one true cavalier—whose lively recollection of those great campaigns (which are second to none the world has seen) and whose sense of what his country owed to ours, formed a strong contrast to that cold ingratitude which desecrated the tomb of the Scottish hero of Corunna, and ploughed up the graves of our brave men, who were buried in the little field beneath the ramparts of Tarifa; and for the repose of whose bones our Government had to pay a sum to Spain.

We received from him a letter to the Governor of Gibraltar, stating that our explanations of the affair of the guarda costa had perfectly satisfied him; and on our rising to retire he made us an offer of a cavalry escort as far as San Roque, which lies within a few miles of our garrison; but being aware that we should be obliged to maintain both the horses and the men, and to make them a handsome donation at parting, I declined, saying that we had an idea of returning by San Lucar de Barameda, and would there take the steamer for Gibraltar.

"But remember there is that restless gentleman, Don Fabrique de Urquija," said the general, smiling; "he makes the roads very unsafe, and does not hesitate to commit such outrages as have not been known in the land since Marshal Massena marched through it."

We assured him of our being ~~without~~ without fear in the

matter; on which he laughed, saying that he knew "los Brittanicos, of old, and that, like our fathers who fought under Wellington, Hill, and Grahame, we also were without fear," and we parted, highly flattered and delighted by our interview with this old Castilian hidalgo.

We lounged long in the Alameda, where the notice our uniform attracted was rather an annoyance. After dining at the hotel and making the most of our costume that our light marching order would admit, we appeared at the door of Donna Dominga's residence in the Calle del Alcazar, just as the cathedral clock struck eight; for the Spaniards are too well bred to esteem any one the more for being late at a conversazione, for such is a tertulia in fact and in effect.

A number of sedans, borne by servants in livery, were standing about the steps of the mansion; and the links and torches flared on the coats of arms that decorated the panels and the collars of Santiago and Calatrava which surrounded them. Various long-visaged and spindle-shanked representatives of the pure old blood of los Cuatros Reinos, untainted by the stain of Moor, or Jew, or heretic, were stalking through the vestibule with due gravity and grandeur.

We were ushered forward by one servant, and were announced by another on entering the saloon, where our old friend Donna Dominga sat with fan and snuff-box in hand receiving her guests; and as her son had prepared her for our visit, she was in a prodigious flutter, with her fat round face forming the apex of a pyramid of black satin and black Cadiz lace; for her veil, which was of the finest texture, fell over all her person.

By her side sat the pretty Paulina on a rich low tabourette, gracefully as a Spanish lady sits at mass, or a Moorish maiden on her little carpet, for it is from their Arabian conquerors that the low seats of the Spanish dames are borrowed

The major, who wore the blue uniform and massive silver epaulettes of "the noble Regiment of St. Anthony," and who had the order of St. John of Portugal on his breast, hurried forward to meet and to present us. Then the younger donna blushed crimson, while the elder wished very much to do so too, and dropping her eyelids, fanned herself, and affected to be much agitated. We bowed very low and then stepped back, as it is not the custom in Spain to shake hands. After a few of those complimentary remarks and those commonplaces, which are customary in every country, we should have withdrawn a little to make way for other tertulianos, had not Donna Dominga especially invited us to remain beside her; and while the presentation continued, and all that were noble (being rich or beautiful went for nought in Seville) appeared in succession, and while caballeros and grave and solemn hidalgos, with the red cross of Calatrava, and the little sword of San Jago dangling at their button-holes, advanced slowly, and with a faint smile and courtly bow laid a hand on their heart and lisped the usual and invariable "A los pies de usted, señoras" (I am at your feet, ladies), and then retired; I was chatting gaily with Paulina, who had now become more assured, and who overwhelmed me with a thousand inquiries about Gibraltar and her friends. Meantime that rogue Jack Slingsby poured into her mother's ear pretended messages from MacLeechy, our doctor—messages so tender and so pitiful that the old lady relented and forgave him being married, saying it was "his misfortune, not his fault, poor man;" Jack asserted his belief that the doctor was quite of her opinion; and then the bulbous-shaped fair one made a vigorous use of her fan and snuff-box, as she conjured up the image of the "gay deceiver."

The saloon was a large apartment; the floor was of polished oak, and was varnished until it shone like glass; the ceiling was of cedar, and divided into deep, dark panels; the walls were painted white, and

were hung with several dusky pictures, principally of religious subjects; one of these was by Roelas; another by Murillo, and both had narrowly escaped abstraction by the French, during the War of Independence, for Messrs. Soult, Suchet, and Co., made everything march over the Pyrenees that was neither too hot nor too heavy.

Our garrison evening parties in Gibraltar had shown Donna Dominga that considerable improvements might be made upon the solemn gravity of the Spanish tertulia; thus the company were pressed to stay longer than usual in honour of us; we had a few airs on the piano—a very antique instrument, said to have been found among Joseph's baggage at Vittoria, and in no way calculated to give full effect to the compositions of Donizetti, Verdi, or Orsini, which Paulina and her companions attempted to give us; but then they had their guitars, and the lively songs of old Spain, and legendary ballads of the brave Avalos of the Ronda, which if destitute of science, had at least the merit of being full of music and melody.

Every sound was hushed as Paulina sang the song which was wont to turn the heads of half Her Majesty's garrison.

“ Since for kissing thee, Minguillo,
Mother's ever scolding me;
Give me swiftly back, O dear one,
Give the kiss I gave to thee !”

Either by chance, or an irresistible inclination, our eyes met just as she sang these very tender and pointed words, and a soft tinge shot over her pure white cheek. My own heart filled with a tumult of emotion, for the aspect of this noble Spanish girl, as she sat on the low tabourette, in an attitude full of grace, with her high proud head and the long veil of black lace that fell from it over her back and shoulders, was so bewildering, that I felt convinced

my peace of mind would require an explanation with her before my bantering mentor and I turned our horses' heads once more towards Gibraltar.

We had now a little waltzing, and a quadrille or two, with plenty of groseille and fleur d'orange.

I had a thousand things to tell Paulina; but when she was the centre of almost every eye in the room, it was no easy matter to be tender; besides, whenever I looked round, the comical eye of Jack Slingsby, with a glass stuck in it, was sure to meet mine; for whatever he was about, in the waltz, the quadrille, in a quiet two-handed flirtation (which, by the way, made the old hidalgos of Seville, who are not wont to tolerate such things, shrug their shoulders and elevate their eyebrows) in the middle of a tender speech, when handing fleur d'orange, restoring a fallen fan, or reclasping a bracelet, he seemed to watch all my proceedings with a species of amused interest—so that nothing passed between Paulina and me but the merest commonplaces.

"The moment so ardently wished for has arrived at last," thought I; "she is beside me, and I have not one word of interest for her."

"And you leave Seville to-morrow?" said she, to break an awkward pause.

"No, señora, in two days."

"A short visit—there are so many things to see here. There is the great tower of Cabildo with its enchanted weathercock, a Pallas with a standard which always indicates the quarter from which an enemy is approaching Seville."

"Ah—yes; I remember in the adventure of Don Quixotte with the Knight of the Wood, the latter boasts, that among other deeds done in honour of his mistress, he 'had challenged the famous fighting giantess, La Giralda of Seville, who is strong and undaunted as one who is made of brass.'"

"And who without changing place is the most inconstant woman in the world. Oh, Don Quixotte, he

is charming! And then in Seville we have the letters of Francisco Pizzaro, of Columbus and the valiant Hernan Cortes; and more than all, we have the cathedral with its Puerta de Perdon, which was the work of a Moorish necromancer, and was all built by a spell between the night and morning. In two days you can never see all these things."

"Your own presence, Donna Paulina, is more than enough to detain me here for ever."

"Then why go so soon?" she asked, with her pretty Spanish lisp, while her long lashes drooped

"Go I must, señora, for, being a soldier, I have nothing to urge; but——"

"But what?"

"The stern necessity of obedience."

"Ay de mi!" said she, gazing fully and honestly at me; "I am so sorry to hear all this."

"I am full of gratitude to hear you say so, señora; but there is no remedy."

"Señor," said she, smiling, "para todo hay remedio sino para la muerte."

"True, there is a remedy for everything but death, it is a good old Spanish proverb," said I; "but is not absence from those we love but a living death? so when I am far from Seville I shall have but the memory of one most beautiful face, and one bright happy night."

"Take this rose," said she, disengaging one from her bouquet; "it will be a memento, though a small one."

"Thanks, señora; but the rose will wither and fade."

"So will the memory of the beautiful face and the one happy night," said she, with a winning smile.

"Never, never Paulina—you are so charming—so gentle and so good, that——"

"Hush, Dios Mio! the people are observing us, and—but ave Maria purissima! what is the matter with my mother?"

During this brief conversation, the servant Pedrillo had delivered a note to Donna Dominga, who, on hurriedly glancing at its contents, uttered a faint cry and fell upon the sofa, where all the ladies crowded in an excited manner round her. Don Joaquim snatched up the letter and read it with flaming eyes.

"What, in Heaven's name, is the matter?" I asked, pressing forward.

"A letter has come from the captain of the guarda costa, stating that the son of Donna Dominga, his lieutenant, had been killed by a shot from the garrison of Gibraltar," said Slingsby, in a rapid whisper. "The absence of the captain general at Jaen prevented the Sevillanos from learning that the person slain was a townsman. I find we are in a mess here, and think we had better be off, my boy."

Though Spain had a post-office in those days when James III. of Scotland was fighting the battles of the people against his traitorous nobility, and when the brutal Henry of England was murdering his wives and burning Catholics and Protestants together at Smithfield, she has so far receded in the arts of peace that this unfortunate letter had been all these many weeks in finding its way from the sea port of Malaga to Seville.

Don Joaquim now said something to Paulina, who turned upon us with eyes full of grief and dismay.

"'T is my brother Hernan you have slain," she exclaimed, in tones that went through me like a sword; "O madre mia, madre mia! they have murdered our dear, dear Hernan!" and she threw herself beside her mother.

"Yes, señores," said Don Joaquim, folding up the letter with an air of sombre ferocity; "her accusation is right, you have heard her; 't is my brother Don Hernan who was killed by your accursed shot from the mole fort of Gibraltar,—Hernan, lieutenant of the guarda costa, and this letter is from his captain, detailing the circumstances of that outrage on the Spanish

flag—an outrage of which I have heard so much since I left Portugal; but which I little thought—O Dios Mio! how little indeed, that it would bring such sorrow to my own house, and to hearts to me so dear. My poor boy brother, Hernan! So, señores, you it is, who were the perpetrators of this foul act? Fit men you were, and proper too, to detail it to our blockhead of a captain general, who was worshipping an old rag at Jaen, when he should have been seeking vengeance at Madrid. But look ye, señores, I'll have it, sure and deep, and as certainly as there is a saint in heaven, sure as my name is Joaquim de Lucena of the regiment of Lagos!"

"Mueran los gabachos—death to the miscreants!" growled a number of voices, and I laid a hand on my sword. It was a natural impulse.

The ladies clustered like a brood of terrified doves round Donna Dominga and her daughter; the gentlemen drew round her son; Slingsby and I were left together in the middle of the large saloon.

"A pleasant predicament this!" said Jack, shrugging his shoulders: "Ramble, I think we had better retire."

"To remain is useless, for these people are alike past listening to explanation or apology," I replied; and with an emotion of mortification and sorrow, which the reader may easily imagine, we took up our swords, made a profound bow to this ungracious company (none of whom responded), and quitted the house.

"Awful business this," said Jack, "is it not, Dick Ramble?—speak—have you lost your tongue?"

"A strange combination of unfortunate circumstances! To find ourselves the honoured guests of the very woman whose son we slew! In what light will Paulina view us, and Don Joaquim too?"

"As an officer he ought to be aware that we did but our duty," urged poor Jack, who felt himself the

most guilty party; "but I did not half like the expression of his eyes as we left the saloon."

"How?"

"I read in them more of hatred and malice, than of horror for the event, or natural grief for his brother's fate."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it!"

"Well, the man is a Spaniard."

"And being so, will not let us off easily."

"We shall have a message from him in the morning, challenging us both to fight, you think?" said I.

"Not at all; your Spaniards don't fight duels; he will lay some desperate snare for us between this and San Roque; so, depend upon it, the sooner we make ourselves scarce in Seville the better. But here is the hotel—for Heaven's sake let us have some iced champagne, for this horrid business has made me as thirsty as if I had crossed a whole county in the hottest hunting season."

I must own that though I was pretty well assured of the truth of Jack's surmises and suspicions, fear for my own safety was quite a secondary emotion to my sincere sorrow for the bereavement we had occasioned to poor old Donna Dominga and the lively Paulina. As for that stormy fellow Joaquim, I felt no compunction for him in the least; his grief was too noisy, and his sudden hostility too deep to leave much room for natural sorrow; and so, while surmising, considering, revolving, and talking the matter threadbare, we finished several bottles of champagne; through the medium of these we easily came to the conclusion that we were the most injured parties; that we had been grossly insulted somehow, over night—that the usual satisfaction was necessary; and then we retired to bed in a state of just and proper indignation at the malevolent threats of Don Joaquim and his friends, to whom the affair formed a notable

subject for discussion at those morning meetings, which are so dearly prized by the Spaniards, who then debate everything from a ballet girl's ancle to a rising in Catalonia; and for these gossips, the place of rendezvous in Seville is the Plaza de San Domingo.

CHAPTER X.

DON FABRIQUE.

WE were awake betimes in the morning, and breakfasted early, in the true Spanish style, on good stiff chocolate with fried eggs, purple wine, and snow-white bread; but no hostile message came from Don Joaquim. The hours stole on, and the sunlit streets threw the shadows of their picturesque façades against each other. The events of the last night, and their probable consequences, had given us a decided distaste for prowling about the streets of Seville. We were both somewhat thoughtful, and said little, or conferred only on the nearest route by which we could reach Gibraltar, in coming from which, we had made somewhat of a *détour*; and Jack hinted that we should probably have some more brawls with *alcaldes*, rows at *posadas*, skirmishes with banditos, and other pleasant adventures, before we reported ourselves "as just arrived" at head quarters.

"A letter for El Señor Capitano Don Ricardo," said the waiter, approaching.

"A letter for you, Dick," said Slingsby.

"So it has come at last," said I, breaking the seal.

"Will it be an affair of knives or pistols?"

"Hush!" said I, as the waiter retired.

"Slugs in a saw-pit, and all that sort of thing—a triangular duel, eh? But an officer should have brought it"

"Yes, had it been that for which you seem so very anxious."

"Anxious! not I, believe me."

"Well, this is from a lady."

"The deuce—you quite interest me. I can perceive that it is penned on pink paper, a little flourished, but without signature. It is from Paulina, poor girl! I can imagine her writing it, and as Byron says—

"‘How tremulously gentle, her small hand—’"

"How can you run on thus?" I asked, imploringly. "Fie upon you, Jack, after all the misery we have wrought to these poor people."

"Well, perhaps you are right and I am wrong. I beg pardon; but the letter—what is it about?"

"Only the safety of our lives."

"Our lives—indeed—how so?"

"Read it."

The note ran thus:—

"SEÑOR DON RICARDO.

"In the name of the Blessed Mother of God, I implore you and your friend to leave Seville on receipt of this, and to take the nearest road for San Lucar de Barameda, where you can reach a steamer, which sails direct for Gibraltar. Don Joaquim vows to have a terrible revenge for the death of our dear brother Hernan; and, last night, was seen in conference with Fabrique de Urquija on the old Alameda. The road you came will be beset—his band are, doubtless, now in hire to waylay you. El santo de los Santos, forgive you the misery you have caused to those who never wronged you, and may it deliver you from the snares of death that lie in your homeward path."

"More melodramatic than pleasant," said Jack.

"It is from Paulina, no doubt—how considerate!"

"Kind and gentle too," added Jack. "Well, all

things duly considered, I think we should take her advice—mount, and be off.”

“Poor—poor Paulina!”

“Deuce take it, Dick, don’t be faint-hearted. ’T will be all one when the route comes for the Crimea, and sell or sail is the word.”

“Not among ‘Ours,’ I hope.”

“The San Lucar road be it.”

“Then the sooner we leave the better, for we have much to lose and nothing to gain by lingering here.”

“For there is neither law, justice, nor honour among these Spaniards,” said Slingsby, making a smart application to the bell-rope.

“What! you say so in the face of this charming letter?”

“Charming, indeed, to be told that a captain of robbers—a picturesque ruffian in a steeple-crowned hat and red garters, has been bribed to cut your throat—to ‘do’ for you in the flower of your youth for a hundred pistoles.”

The letter raised a glow of sad, of kind, and regretful emotions within me; but I stifled them all, and, calling for the bill, settled with the landlord in person.

“What manner of magistrates have you here in Seville?” asked the unwary Jack.

“How, señor?”

“When they permit thieves to prowl about your streets at night.”

“Thieves, señor—Ave Maria!”

“Yes, thieves, señor patron. Fabrique de Urquija was on the old Alameda last night with a well-known bravo from Portugal.”

“Don Fabrique,” reiterated our host, aghast at the name; “ah, he is too great a man to be easily arrested, señor.”

“Is he not a mere ladrone?”

“True, Caballero; but then his band is numerous. Yes, señor; Ave Maria purissima!—tiene con exer-

cito de 10,000 ombres—all determined en, and armed to the teeth.”

“Ten thousand men—nonsense! A hundred, more probably.”

The host felt his veracity impugned, and he called upon all the saints in the calendar to witness the truth of his assertions; and while we had a decanter of wine before starting, he told us a vast number of anecdotes, descriptive of the cruel and unscrupulous character of the so-called Don Fabrique. Two of these occurred to me as being peculiarly diabolical in their nature.

On one occasion he plundered the house of a wealthy merchant near Estephana, a town on the Grenada coast; and because the unfortunate proprietor would not yield up the alleged treasures of his strong box, and sign bills on his bankers in Seville, Fabrique snatched up a camphine lamp from a marble side-table, and, with a dreadful oath, poured the contents over the hair and whiskers of his prisoner. He then deliberately applied a lighted candle thereto, and in a moment the whole face and head of the miserable man were enveloped in flames. His skull was roasted like a large castano, and he died in great misery—his head being literally burned off!

Another amiable little trait of Don Fabrique was the strange way he took to remove his predecessor from the command of the troop. This was a rough old guerilla, who in his youth had fought in the campaigns of Wellington, under Don Julian Sanchez, the famous Captain Harelip, as our soldiers named him, and latterly in the service of the Carlists, under the banished Conde de Morella.

The robber captain—Gomes el Guerilla—having incurred the animosity of Fabrique, that worthy procured some gun-cotton (which our patron believed to be a preparation by the devil himself), from a drug-chest, when investigating the shop of a botarico (apothecary) at Castellar; and some of this he placed

in the folds of Gomes' neckcloth in the night, and for three days the old and unsuspecting sinner wore this dreadful thing under his well-bearded chin. On the third, Fabrique, who began to lose patience, and vow to have vengeance on the botarico, said, "Come, señor, let us make up a little cigar;" so the cigar was made, and they proceeded to smoke, until some sparks fell on the breast of the old guerilla; and then, Madre de Dios! there was a dreadful flash and explosion like that of a cannon; and to the consternation of all his band, the head of Gomes was blown right off his shoulders, and not a vestige of it was ever seen again.

"The noble Caballeros," continued our host, "have no doubt heard of the great robber-chief, Manuel de Cordova, who in January, 1853, killed the commandant of the civic guard of Rute?"

"No."

"He was betrayed by Don Fabrique, and shot to death by a platoon of infantry, in the Plaza of Cordova. Oh, señor, the saints deliver us from the devil and Don Fabrique!"

"So say I," added Jack, as the landlord left us, and thus, being impressed alike by these communications and that of Donna Paulina, we resolved to change our route and avoid this formidable personage who took such an interest in our proceedings.

To deceive any person who might be watching about the hotel, or be bribed by Fabrique, or the major, we made particular inquiries of the patron, the waiters, and stable-boys concerning the road to Gibraltar by the way of Puerto Serrano; and having, as Jack said, "completely thrown dust in their eyes," we took the route to San Lucar and left Seville at a rapid trot about an hour after noon, pausing only to give a peseta to a poor Franciscan who begged from us at the city gate.

I looked back to Seville as we galloped away.

The tower of La Giralda and all its spires were

sinking in the sunny haze and lessening in the distance.

"So ends an intimacy that might have ripened into something better," thought I.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RATERILLO.

PASSING Coria del Rio, a little province and partido, after a twenty miles' ride we halted to dine at Lebrija, which is so famed for its oil of olives, and there we got some prime Xeres, which bore the private mark of the señores Gonzalez and Dubosc, the famous wine merchants; and now we enjoyed the hope that our acquaintance Fabrique de Urquija and his "ten thousand hombres" (or whatever their number might be) were sunning themselves on the mountains, and lying in wait for us on the dusty road by Puerto Serrano; and any anxiety we might have felt to reach the coast unmolested began to lessen when we set forth again, while the evening sun was verging towards the western sierras of the province, and pursuing an old and narrow path, so old that perhaps the Christian knights of King Ferdinand might have traversed it to battle with the Emirs of Granada, of Seville, and Cordova, we rode on, amid varied scenery, where luxuriant creepers almost veiled the granite rocks like natural curtains, where large fields of maize surrounded ancient villages left ruined and roofless in the late civil wars, where herds of half wild cattle browsed on the green mountain slope; where the dead man's cross, the wayside chapel, the groves of cork, of olive or orange trees bordered the devious path, and the shattered atalaya that whilome watched

the frontiers of Mohammed of Cadiz, towered over all, a landmark to the Guadalquivir.

Charmed by the scenery, we allowed the reins to fall on the necks of our horses, and careless as to whether or not we found quarters for the night in an olive wood or in Trohñiona, which we were now approaching, and the little spire of which we saw peeping above its bright green groves and tipped with a fiery gleam, we rode on slowly until near a well which flowed into a stone basin, under a rude representation of our Lady of Assistance—a wayside chapel, in fact—a turn of the path brought us suddenly upon two armed Spaniards, who were seated on the sward playing with cards in the twilight, for the time was evening now.

One of these, by his gay attire, his embroidered jacket with its silver clasps, his sash of red and yellow stripes and his velvet hat, as well as by the horse which stood near him, well laden with packages, and having a long gun slung at its demipique saddle, I perceived to be a professed smuggler; and on our nearer approach we both recognised our old friend Pedro el Contrabandista, who supplied our mess with cigars, and whose unlucky pursuit by the guarda costa had been the source of so much travelling, turmoil, and inquiry to Slingsby and to myself.

There was no mistaking the other as a raterillo—that is, “a little rat,” or pickpocket, on whose cloth the regular armed bandit who robs convoys, fights the carabineros, and burns a village occasionally, looks down as the line do on the militia, or as the militia do on the yeomanry. The only weapon of the raterillo is his knife, and perhaps a concealed pistol. Polite almost to servility to the armed man, the raterillo is usually a bully to the peaceable, and to those who are too poor to carry that long musket which is the constant companion of the provincial Spaniard.

He doffed his threadbare sombrero and bowed with great humility as we reined up beside them to greet honest Pedro, who received us with a hearty shout of welcome.

"Well, amigo mio," said I, "we were not aware that you did business by land as well as by sea."

"True, señor, I should have been a woman, for I am never constant to anything; I am glad to meet two noble cavaliers of the garrison travelling here—but why so far from Gibraltar, and without an escort?"

"All owing to you, Pedro, my valiant contrabandista, and your troublesome affairs."

"Pardon, señor, I do not comprehend."

"That devilish shot from the Mole fort."

"Oh, yes—ha, ha! it cut in two halves Don Hernan de Lucena, and enabled me to run my little felucca safe into Gibraltar—eh."

"Yes, but we had to visit the captain general at Seville, and to explain the affair to him in person. So we are here."

"On your way back."

"Exactly so."

"I owe you a thousand thanks for that little piece of attention from the Mole fort, señores; but for that, I should now, perhaps, have been chained to an oar in the Queen's galleys at Barcelona, for I was as sure of being taken as there is a saint in heaven. Well, señores, we shall sup together to-night at Trohnonia—see, yonder is its spire shining like a red star in the sunset; I have my guitar, and shall sing to you the newest seguidilla and some jovial romances about the Granadine Moors, the Castilian Caballeros, or the Carlists, and enchanters; but, meantime, I must finish a game to which I was challenged by this traveller, on whom I shall have proper revenge, for he has already won from me forty duros; and you the while will do me the favour to accept some of my best cigars."

There was no resisting this jolly contrabandista;

so, as we had before arranged to halt for the night at Trohnia, we were the better for the companionship of another man, who knew the country, and was doubtless a favourite with the people, and who, moreover, was well armed, stout, and determined. We watched the game between him and the raterillo, who won dollar after dollar with a facility that soon left no doubt whatever in our minds that he was cheating poor Pedro, so Jack and I exchanged frequent glances.

"Whose cards are these?" I asked.

"The señor travalero's," said Pedro, "and I begin to think he knows the backs better than the fronts of them."

The raterillo, whose quick eyes rolled in a restless manner, laughed as he pocketed three other duros of Pedro, who began to lose all patience and to flush, while a dark gleam shot over his eyes; and on detecting in his adversary some real or suspected piece of foul play, he dashed the cards full in his face, crying,—

"You are a rogue and a thief—a pitiful little rat, and if you do not yield back every peseta you have won, 'por el nombre de Dios,' I will be at you with my Albacete knife!"

"Then the knife be it," retorted the raterillo, crushing his well-worn hat over his eye-brows; "shall we have our feet tied together?"

"No, we shall fight it out on the grass, and I will have your black blood and my hard-won dollars together," cried Pedro, who was choking with sudden passion; and quick almost as thought, they confronted each other, their dark faces contorted by ferocity, their eyes flashing fire, their feet planted on the turf, their bodies bent forward ready to spring, and their cuchillos held firmly in the right hand, the thumb being pressed upon the blade in such a manner as to enable them to stab or to cut with equal facility.

Several blows had been given and skilfully eluded

before Jack and I, who had drawn our swords, could dismount and interfere; but just as we pressed in between them, at the peril of our lives, we heard a cheer like a yell ringing in the hollow, and saw a crowd of armed men rushing down the sloping banks which bordered the road-way.

“Ladrones—ladrones—fly, señores!” cried Pedro, as he leaped on his horse and dashed at full speed towards Trohniona, followed by several musket-bullets, while the raterillo vanished in the twilight as if the earth had swallowed him up.

In a moment we were surrounded by a crowd of armed banditti—oh, there was no mistaking them!—I was collared and pinioned just as my foot was in the stirrup, and poor Jack Slingsby was knocked off his horse by the butt-end of a long Spanish gun; our swords and revolvers, our watches, rings, purses, and cigar-cases; our horses and valises, all in a moment became the spoil of the Egyptians, and we found ourselves prisoners at the mercy of—Fabrique de Urquija!

CHAPTER XII.

LA RIO DE MUERTE.

DARKY-isaged and black-bearded, with long sable hair hanging over their collars from under their battered sombreros, or gathered up in net-work caul, the robbers presented every picturesque variety of Spanish costume. Some wore jackets of black or olive-coloured velvet, richly covered with needlework on the breast and seams; their waists were girt by bright-coloured sashes, and their legs encased in velvet small-clothes and leathern gaiters; while others were sans shirts and sans shoes; scantily attired in rough zamarras of sheepskin, with tattered breeches—their brawny legs and muscular chests being bare. All were well

armed with muskets, Albacete knives, and pistols, and all were ferocious, resolute, and reckless alike in spirit and in aspect. A glance showed me all this, as we were dragged by them through an olive thicket, where, upon the prostrate column of some old Roman temple, we found their leader seated.

The moon had now risen brightly above the mountains, and in the sashed and armed figure before me, with a jacket glittering with embroidery, his carbine resting in the hollow of his right arm, I recognised our former acquaintance whom we had met by the wayside between Castellar and Estrelo, and with whom we were hobbing and nobbing over a cigar and *bota*, when poor sister St. Veronica came to ask alms of us.

The cruelties of which, on that occasion, he had so freely avowed himself guilty, and those other traits of character, such as the affair of the camphine lamp and the neckcloth so pleasantly padded with gun-cotton, occurred to us; and I must own, that when we found ourselves bound as prisoners and confronting the cold, stern and impassible visage of this celebrated Spanish outlaw, a restless anxiety made our hearts throb with new and undefined emotions. In all things his bearing and disposition were similar to those of his friend* whom he betrayed in 1853, and whose atrocities have been published, like his own, at length in the columns of the "*Heraldo de Madrid*." Neither Slingsby nor I had ever been in such a desperate predicament before, as the reader may easily conceive; thus we could scarcely realise it, and, naturally enough, indignation was uppermost in our minds.

The intellectual part of Fabrique's face, though exceedingly handsome, was immovable as that of a statue, his two black eyes remained fixedly regarding us, and even when his bearded mouth relaxed into a grim smile, one-half of his face remained unmoved.

* Francisco Manuel de Cordova.

He seemed calm and pale in the white moon-light—but the cicatrised wound which traversed his cheek was of a deep and dusky red.

“Well, señor,” said I, briskly, “are you fully prepared to answer for the attack you have made upon us?”

“Answer,” he reiterated, with something between a frown and disdainful smile; “to whom?”

“The captain general of Andalusia.”

“I have so many things to answer for already to that illustrious Caballero of Seville, that he will be very apt to forget your little affair among others.”

“But the Governor of Her Brittanic Majesty’s garrison at Gibraltar will refresh both his memory and yours, rascal!” said poor Slingsby, whose face was streaming with blood.

“Stuff, señores. Our Lady Donna Isabella II. alone is Queen of Gibraltar, whatever you may believe to the contrary.”

“Then there is our ambassador at Madrid,” said I, swelling with passion.

“Let the Señor Embajador come hither to seek you, if he chooses,” replied Fabrique, with a scowl, while his band made the wooded hollow ring with their laughter.

“For what reason, and with what purpose, is this outrage committed upon us?” asked Jack, more calmly.

“The reason is here,” said Fabrique, throwing up a heavy purse. “From the noble Don Joaquim, Major in the service of the young king Don Pedro V., I have received one thousand duros to intercept you——”

“And the purpose?”

“To avenge his brother’s death.”

“In what manner?”

“By taking your lives, that is all; blood for blood, you know; an eye for an eye, a limb for a limb, and a life for a life, are law and justice all the world over.

If my friend the blind abagado of Jaen were here, he could not explain the law better."

Zumalacarregui, when giving a light from his own cigar to the Carlist prisoners he was just about to shoot, could not have spoken more coolly.

"And so, fellow, you have received a thousand duros to murder us?" said Jack, abruptly.

"One thousand, señor," was the quiet reply.

"Conduct us to the harbour of San Lucar, and I will give you my word of honour that two thousand shall be sent to you."

"You would not break your plighted word?"

"I would rather die!"

"Then bear in mind that I have pledged mine; and that I also would rather die than break it. No, señores; all the gold in Madrid would not save you."

After a pause,—

"How came you to discover us so readily on this road?" I asked.

"Easily. I had spies planted at every gate of Seville. A Franciscan begged alms of you at the Puerto of the San Lucar road."

"To whom I gave a peseta."

"T was I."

"You! I wish that I had recognised you then."

"Muchos gratias, señor—my own mother would not have known me. I took care of that, and now I shall take care of you."

"It is incredible that a companion so jovial as the Major de Lucena could contemplate this intended atrocity," exclaimed Slingsby."

"Have you not his sister's letter here?" asked Fabrique, displaying that little document, of which his searchers had deprived me; "you Inglesos would doubt the holy face of Jaen, even if it were placed before you! I received a thousand dollars to shoot you down like dogs or wild pigs, and here we are chattering away like so many magpies. Vamos alla—to the mountains—cammarados, basta!"

"We are not, then, to be shot?" I asked, as a gleam of hope brightened before me.

"No," said he, with an icy smile, as his dark fierce face came close to mine, like that of a handsome spectre in the moonlight and as the whole band began to move; "we will give you to drink of the Rio de Muerte."

The River of Death!—our blood ran cold at these words; but no time was left us for expostulation, as we were hurried up the hills, over wild and furzy banks, where the laurel, the vine, and the fair yellow paunch of the gourd grew together in luxuriance; and among rocks, where the nimble goat browsed, and the untamed porker flew before us, squeaking from his lair, among the aromatic plants, the long reedy grass, the giant fern, and the broad-leaved dock. Up, up we went, alternately clambering, or being pushed and dragged, until we gained the brow of a steep hill, from which we saw beneath us in the broad, clear, liquid moonlight, the waters of the Guadalquiver winding away between groves of the orange and the olive, to San Lucar; and in the middle distance, but far down below us, the white houses of Trohnia clustered round their little church.

CHAPTER XIII.

PEDRO THE CONTRABANDISTA.

AFTER a painful and anxious hour elapsed, and we had traversed about two miles of a steep and craggy ascent, until we reached a part of the mountain range which was entirely covered by a little forest of laurels. Above us, in the dark blue sky, the moon was hanging like a large silver globe, and the flood of clear cold light it diffused over the distant landscape enabled us to distinguish objects with great minute-

ness. Thus I could trace the gleaming course of the Guadalquivir, as it wound down from Seville past Borminos, the mouth of the Guadamar, and the hills that overhang Dos Hermanos; while other sierras in the distance undulated afar off, like the waves of a petrified sea, if such a simile may be allowed me. Light glinted at times upon the river. It came from a passing steamer. Down there in the valley was the civilisation of our own time; yet we were about to perish by the hands of outlaws, whose bearing and character were worthy of the middle ages, or the mistier time that lies beyond them.

Jack Slingsby and I had scarcely spoken during our steep and rapid clamber, but our thoughts were the same; anxiety—intense anxiety—for our fate; repugnance for our captors, and a natural horror of dying a barbarous death at their hands, on these remote and lonely mountains; far from help, far from justice and from civilisation; a death, of which our friends, our relations, and our comrades would never hear—would never know; for our fate would become a mystery, which all the captains general, the ambassadors, the *chargés des affaires*, and even the correspondents of the “Times” would be unable to clear up or unravel,—as it was the purpose of these wretches, whose prey we had become, to hide for ever our remains, and the very means of our death, as completely as if we had been flung into Mount Etna.

In this sequestered part of the mountain chain, hidden among the thickly-twined laurels, the wild and straggling vines, and the densely-matted jungle of gourds, and other luxuriant creepers, there suddenly yawned a chasm in the granite rocks—a black profundity of unknown depth. The gaping rent was about twenty feet broad by some hundred in length, but its mouth was greatly diminished by the bordering foliage and wild plants that overhung it. Far down, perhaps five hundred feet below (for the bottom was

unseen), there rolled with a deep, hoarse, roaring sound the Rio de Muerte—the River of Death—a subterranean tributary of the Guadalquivir; and its strange and hollow voice as it gurgled, surged, and bellowed through the clefts and fissures in the heart of the mountains, filled me with a pang of horror. Here we paused, and our captors muttered one to another under their thick beards, smoked their paper cigaritos, and leaned leisurely on their short escapetas, or long-barrelled muskets, and seemed to await the approach of Fabrique de Urquija, who was some yards behind us, and came up very much at his ease.

“My God!” said my friend, “if it be their purpose to—to——”

“To throw us down there, you would say? My dear Slingsby, such seems indeed to be their dreadful purpose, and I see here but little hope of mercy or of charity, where bribes greater than those of that infamous major have failed before a savage idea of honour and the fulfilment of a villanous trust.”

“Heaven help us!”

“If these are not your prayers, señores,” said one fellow in Spanish, with a slight Murcian accent, “you had better betake yourselves to them, for in less than ten minutes you will be at the bottom of this terrible place, and be swept through the bowels of the mountain towards the Guadalquivir.”

The man spoke gently and with some emotion; it was evident that his dreadful life had not yet obliterated every remnant of civilisation and humanity. There was, moreover, something terribly impressive in his words, when heard amid the hoarse rush of that deep and subterranean torrent, whose waters came we knew not from where, and traversed depths and caverns, of which we could have no conception, in their way to the valley below.

There was a refined cruelty in bringing us to such a place, and to die such a death; for the mind “shrunk back upon itself and trembled,” when con-

templating the dark profundity through which this mysterious torrent poured.

"Pray, good senores, pray," said this man, kindly again, as he touched me on the shoulder, "down upon your knees, for here comes the capitano, and he never tarries with his prisoners on the brink of the Rio de Muerte, or the Cima de Cabra."

"What does the fellow say?" asked poor Slingsby, who looked a little pale, and whose nether lip was tightly clenched.

"He bids us lose no time, but to pray."

"Pray!" reiterated Jack, fiercely; "I pray to Heaven only that my hands were loose for one moment, that I might strike a blow for life or for revenge."

"Threats are absurd, señor," said Fabrique de Urquija, throwing the end of his cigar with perfect deliberation into the chasm that yawned before us; "and bribes are alike useless——"

"Can it be, brave Spaniards," said I, becoming desperate, and encouraged by the evident sympathy of one to endeavour to soften the rest; "can it be that you will prove so cruel and so merciless to two unoffending strangers who——"

"Silence, señores!" exclaimed Fabrique, in a voice of thunder, while drawing a pistol from his belt; "in attempting to tamper with my followers you but anticipate your fate. Iago Pineda—Stephano el Corcovado, over with them! dost thou hear me? presto! or by the mother of God, this bullet shall see the brains of some of you."

He ground his teeth; his eyes shot fire, and his broad nostrils seemed to dilate as he gave this savage order.

Stephano the humpbacked, and the other who was named Iago Pineda, and who was no other than our sympathetic friend, threw down their escopetas and grasped me. They were powerful and muscular men—aye, men of iron frames and iron hearts, and

a sickening emotion rose within me as their hands were roughly laid upon my pinioned arms. The moonlit mountains and the far-stretching Vega swam around me; the forms of our murderers were multiplied a thousandfold; the perspiration fell heavily from my brow, and a half-arrested cry to Heaven for that pity which men denied us here, arose to my lips as they were about to hurl me downward; when, lo! Pineda paused, looked back, and listening, relinquished my right arm.

"Do you think, do you dare to disobey?" cried Fabrique, as he levelled a brass-barrelled pistol full at his head; "to work at once, vile mutineer, or por vida del demonio——"

"Hold — para — detenedos!" cried a breathless voice, and a man mounted on horseback, and armed with a long gun, dashed his jennet at full speed through the laurel bushes into the midst of the free company.

"Who cries hold?" demanded Fabrique, almost choking with passion, while turning his pistol against the intruder; and all his people cocked or clubbed their muskets in high alarm.

"I do—I, your brother Pedro the contrabandista."

"Oho, and what seek you here?"

"The safety of these two Caballeros, who at Gibraltar saved me from the guarda costa of Hernan de Lucena in the first place, and from the chain and the scourge in Her Majesty's galleys in the second place."

"How! was it you, brother Pedro, whose felucca was concerned in this business?" asked Fabrique, with an altered voice.

"Yes, Fabrique, it was my little craft, La Buena Fortuna, which the Lieutenant De Lucena pursued till a shot from the Mole fort shortened him by two feet. I claim their lives, for they are my friends and patrons, and would have supped with me to-night at Trohnia had not your devilish fellows

came upon us like a herd of wild cats, just when I was kicking and cuffing yonder rascally raterillo, who has made off with all my dollars. So I fled from the wayside-well, for I knew not whose free company your lads had the honour to be, and feared they might relieve me alike of life and all care for my packages."

Jack and I now began to breathe a little more freely; for as all this took place in less time than I have taken to write it, there was some difficulty in realising the conviction that we had been waylaid, doomed to death and saved, with such rapidity: yet so it was, and so ended the scene of that night to which I can never recur without a chill of awe and horror, blended with a very decided sensation of anger and just indignation.

Notwithstanding the alleged solemnity with which his word was plighted to the malevolent major of the sainted regiment of Lagos, "in the kingdom of Algarve," Fabrique relinquished his cruel purpose, unbound us at his brother's request, and restored to us our arms, horses, and little baggage—everything, in short, not even excepting the letter of poor Paulina. He gave us cigars, a hearty quaff from his bota, and then a bow so low that his black velvet sombrero almost swept the dewy sward. He then drew off with all his band towards the Sierra de Ronda, and in two hours afterwards we were comfortably seated by the kitchen fire in the posada of Trohniona, at supper with his brother the contrabandista, who was en route for San Lucar.

For some time after, throughout the night in which these startling events occurred, in fancy I saw before me the cold, stern visage and fierce glaring eyes of Urquija, and above all other sounds I seemed to hear the deep hoarse rush of the subterranean Rio de Muerte

CHAPTER XIV

THE SPANISH STEAMER.

WHATEVER may have been the emotions with which we regarded the formidable relative of our contrabandista, we spared him the humiliation of listening to the just appreciation we had of the character of Fabrique ; and enlivened by those songs and stories with which the honest fellow endeavoured to raise our spirits and efface the terrible recollection of that hour upon the hills of Trohniona, we supped upon a guisado and bottle of valdepenas.

Now I may inform the uninitiated that the aforesaid guisado was a stew, such as can only be made in a real Spanish pipkin. It consisted of two chickens, a plump partridge, and a hare, well seasoned with oil, garlic, pepper, and saffron all simmered together. When hot and steaming, the giblets, &c., are fished up from the depths of the savoury pipkin, with just such a wooden spoon as paunchy Sancho used, when diving therewith into his beloved flesh-pots at the wedding of Camacho.

Supper over, and a fresh bota ordered, Pedro assumed his guitar, and while we cleaned and examined our swords and pistols, and all the people of the posada, the patron and patrona, the waitresses, the stabler, and the little half-naked muchaco who cleaned the boots and turned the spit, crowded near, he, the jovial contrabandista, turned his dark eyes and well-bearded visage towards the dusky wooden ceiling, and while his swarthy cheek glowed in the light of the kitchen fire, struck up one of those lively seguidillas which are the delight of the Spaniards, and skilfully he brushed the strings with his finger-points in

a manner which I believe is peculiar to the Andalusians.

A very amorous love ditty succeeded, and when the roguish eyes of Pedro wandered knowingly from one person to another, the patrona blushed with pleasure, and all the waitresses simpered and spread out their short but full-flounced skirts, or displayed their handsome red stockings, to let their well-shaped legs be seen, as well as their pretty zapatas ; for the roving and romantic contrabandista, whose habits are so full of life and energy, is ever a welcome guest at the wayside inns of Spain, and to none more than their fairer inmates.

Now Pedro's gaudy brown jacket, all covered with silver bell-buttons, bright silken lace, and spangles ; his ample breeches of gay velveteen ; his brilliant sash and broad hat placed a little over the right eye, made him a welcome visitor to all the women, while the stories, news, or fibs which his incessant perambulations afforded him ample means of collecting, made him equally acceptable to the men ; thus, like other bold contrabandistas, who by sea and land set the laws of the Cortes at defiance, Pedro was always sure of the brightest smiles, the oldest wine in the cellar, the best fowl in the larder, the warmest corner by the kitchen fire, and the most snug cama in the posada, while pretty hands stroked his docile jennet, and readier ones removed his corded packages, and placed his guitar and loaded gun by his bedside for the night.

Pedro's songs, and the stories he told during the single night we spent with him, would fill a volume ; but the time passed rapidly away ; we were up sometimes, mounted and armed to ride ; and with something of real satisfaction, Jack and I turned our backs on those hated mountains, where a thicket of green laurels, diminished to a black speck by the distance, indicated the locality of the Rio de Muerte.

Trotting pleasantly, we passed Isla-mayor, which lies about twelve miles from the mouth of the

Guadalquiver, and abounds in fruit-trees, which were then in full blossom.

By this time, Paulina, her dark eyes, and her witchery were alike forgotten, and her little note on pink paper had been smoked away in cigaritos. The keen interest taken in our affairs by the major had completely cured me; so much for Spanish romance contrasted with Spanish reality.

"And you have decided on taking the steamer at San Lucar, señores?" said Pedro.

"Yes, and happy shall we be to find ourselves safe on board of her," said I; "we have had too many devilish scrapes among you Spaniards to wish for more travelling in the saddle. It is no joke to escape being hanged as a spy by a blundering alcalde one day, and a terrible death the next by drowning, at the hands of ——"

"My brother Fabrique," said he, good-humouredly, closing a sentence, the termination of which might have proved unpleasant. "Well, señores, my little felucca the 'Buena Fortuna'—you know her, with her long brass gun and lateen sails—is lying concealed in a solitary creek near Carbonera. I have run her in there, because a fleet—yes, maldito—a whole fleet of guarda costas are at anchor in the harbour of San Lucar; but we must put to sea to-morrow night, and if you will so far honour me, Caballeros, as to accept a passage with me to Gibraltar, the best valdepenas and the noblest Xeres that ever came out of a madre-butt shall be at your service. Ah, you shake your head, Señor Don Ricardo, and think you have had enough of me and my poor little craft ——"

"Right, Pedro, and wish to have no more affairs with a guarda costa," said Slingsby; "besides, if you were attacked and taken at sea, after a fight, you would fight, of course ——"

"To the death, Señor, guerra al cuchillo, as the old guerillas say."

"Well—what would be our fate?"

“True, señor. If not killed, you would be sent to the galleys at Barcelona, and so might as well have taken a dip in the Rio de Muerte. Well, I will cease to urge you. Here is the gate of Bonanza, which may be termed the port of Seville, though the city is fifteen leagues distant; yonder is its castle, with the Spanish flag flying, and here is the quay, where all large vessels laden with goods discharge their cargoes, as the shallowness of the Guadalquiver will not permit them to ascend higher—you understand, señores?”

Here at this small town we bade farewell to Pedro, who promised to visit us as soon as he came round to Gibraltar; and pushing on, after a trot of a mile or two over a dreary and sandy waste, we found ourselves amid the sunny and bustling streets of San Lucar de Barameda, where we sought at once its harbour, the quays of which were, as usual, piled chin deep with boxes of oranges, of raisins, and of prunes, casks of salt, of wine, and of brandy; while the flags of all nations—the stars and stripes of North America, the eagles and tricolours of the South, the union jack and the crosses of Scandinavia—were waving among a forest of masts; in short, we found ourselves amid all the noise and lively stir of a Spanish seaport, where the splash of the screw propeller furrowed the waters of the Guadalquiver, and the steam, as it escaped at times, was like music to us, who had just eluded the fangs of Fabrique’s mountain wolves.

We soon found the boat for Gibraltar, “*Neustra Señora de Assistencia*,” and embarked ourselves and our horses, which were taken on board in stalls, that were slung from a whip at the yard-arm; and in an hour after, muffled in our cloaks, with choice cubas to solace us, we lounged on the paddle gangway as the vessel steamed out of the harbour between the two castles of San Lucar—the same fortresses which saluted the little fleet of Columbus, when departing in search of a western world—and passed the road-

stead and the dangerous entrance, where the wild waves are ever beating in tumult; and thus we left the port enveloped in a golden haze and diminishing astern, as the sun set behind the mountain peaks of Seville.

The bay of Cadiz soon opened on our larboard bow, and the city itself, with all its lights and spires, and then the Isla de Leon arose before us, white and glimmering in the moonlight.

The silver waves seemed to toy with the golden sand, as their coy riplets chafed the beach; but in other places the moonlit sea dashed its spray like showers of diamonds and prisms against the abutting rocks.

Overhead, the dark blue sky was clear and cloudless, save where a long black pennon of wavy smoke streamed far astern from the glowing funnel of "Our Lady of Assistance," and all was still save the ceaseless and monotonous dashing of the paddle-wheels, and the measured clank of the engines, as we ploughed along the lovely Spanish shore, and towards midnight saw that point of land on which no Briton can gaze without an emotion of pride, the Cape of Trafalgar.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CIRCASSIAN CAPTAIN.

ON board the steamer our attention had been repeatedly attracted, and our interest—mine, at least—excited by a fellow-passenger, whose manner, costume, and bearing were too remarkable to escape notice.

His figure was tall and handsomely formed; his features, pale and like marble, were cast in the most pure and severe model of classic beauty; his nose

was long and straight; his black eye-brows nearly met over it in one unbroken line; a fierce mustache stuck out on each side, giving great expression to a mouth, the lips of which were generally compressed, and in expression stern.

Altogether, his face had in it more of pure intellect and pictorial manly beauty than any I had ever seen. His costume was a scarlet forage cap, the tassel of which drooped on his right shoulder, and a loose tunic of dark green cloth, the cuffs, collar, and skirts of which were trimmed with sables; but this peculiar garment, like his long military boots, seemed well worn, or as Jack said, "decidedly shabby."

He remained very much aloof from the passengers, and either sat or walked apart, communing apparently with himself, and smoking a huge pipe, the aspect of which was as foreign as his own.

A figure so melo-dramatic on board of a steamer—even a Spanish one—was too remarkable in the present day to escape notice, and I repeatedly drew Slingsby's attention to him; but honest Jack had not quite recovered the effect of the start given him last night on the hills of Trohnia, and replied briefly,—

"An interesting foreigner, eh! that will sound very well to the ears of a novel-reading miss at home; but such personages excite a very different feeling in me. A seedy sharper! I am sick, Ramble, of your interesting foreigners; they are invariably swindlers, refugees, and all that sort of thing, unless we except the poor monkeys in the Zoological gardens," and so Jack assumed a sulky air of reserve, while our voyager in the furs and long boots smoked his huge meerscham to leeward, and all unconscious that he was an object of remark or interest to any one.

On visiting our horses in the stalls, we found that our fellow-traveller had also a nag, and that this animal seemed the object of all his cares; for he was by its side almost every half hour, stroking its sleek coat and slender legs; tickling its square nostrils and

pointed ears, or wiping its fine liquid eyes with his white handkerchief, and feeding it from the palm of his hands, which were white and muscular, while he spoke caressingly in a barbarous language, which the horse—a noble Arab-steed, with a magnificent head, and limbs as slender as a girl's wrist—seemed to understand. There was something so peculiar in all this, and especially in the man's strong and tender regard for his horse, that Slingsby's John Bullism began to relax, for the proverbial crustiness of his country little became a frank fellow like him; so he ventured a few remarks in English on horses in general, and this fine barb in particular.

The foreigner shook his head, and smiled pleasantly, as he articulated with difficulty that he scarcely knew a word of English; whereupon Jack turned his remarks into very choice Spanish.

Again the stranger smiled and bowed, showing under his close and thick mustache that he had a set of teeth our brightest belles might envy, as he said in the language of our allies,—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I speak only French with my native language; and it may be a little—Russ."

"Russ—indeed!" said I, with fresh interest; "are you a Cossack?"

"No," said he, with a sudden air of haughty reserve, "do I look like one?"

"I cannot say," said Jack, "as I never saw one."

He was about to withdraw, as if our notice was displeasing to him, when it chanced that a puff of wind opened my cloak, and below it he perceived the scarlet shell jacket, which was the undress of "Ours." Then his bold dark eye lighted up with new animation, and raising his forage cap, he said, smilingly, in French, which he spoke with great fluency and a good accent,—

"Officers, I perceive, and, better than all, British officers! Would that I had known this sooner, we might have had a pleasant evening together; but now

our voyage is nearly half over, as the captain has just told me. I am so glad to meet you, gentlemen, for I, too, have had the honour to wear a sword."

"May I ask in what service?" said Jack.

"The Russian, latterly."

"Indeed!"

"You are surprised," he said, with a sigh.

"Rather."

"It was the result of fate, or rather the fortune of war, that placed me in their ranks. I was taken in battle, and had no alternative but to serve in the imperial cavalry, or drag a chain over the snows of Siberia; and thus I accepted the former, resolving to escape to my own dear mountains on the first opportunity. I am a Circassian, and fought under the heroic Schamyl, though latterly I held the rank of captain in the Tenginski hussars; but tyranny and misfortune drove me from the Russian ranks before a proper opportunity for escape had come; and I have wandered over many lands with no companion save my horse—my dear Zupi," he continued, caressing the Arab, which rubbed its fine head upon his cheek, as if understanding the reference its master had just made; "my beloved Zupi, who has shared with me many a day of peril, and has thrice saved my life from Russian bullets and from drowning; for there is no horse like thee, Zupi, between the Kuban and the Caspian Sea."

"He is quite a Mazeppa, this," said Jack, in English.

"And you are now going to Gibraltar?" I asked.

"Yes, gentlemen; but I merely make a visit there, and at Malta, on my way home through Turkey; as I have a letter of introduction to an officer of your garrison."

"May I ask his name?"

"It is here: John Slingsby, Esq., Lieutenant, H.M. —th Foot—perhaps you know him?"

"The deuce! It is for me; I am Slingsby of the —th," said Jack, in astonishment, for he was puz-

zled to remember what friends he had among the Tengginski hussars, or on the shores of the Caspian Sea; "devilish odd, sir! I really don't know any one in Circassia, or any one who ever was there, or likely to be so."

"I received this letter in London," said the stranger, with a soft smile; "at a clubhouse of the Guards, for the officers of the Household Brigade were more than kind; being, indeed, as fathers to me, and treating me as if I had been their own son, instead of what I am—a poor waif, floating on the current of events."

"I am the man," said Jack, tearing open the letter which the Circassian produced from his breast-pocket, and delivered; but with the slightest possible shade of anxiety on his fine but saddened face. Poor fellow! he had doubtless been so often deceived and misused, that he was learning to mistrust every one, and his eyes were riveted on the face of Slingsby, who suddenly shook him by the hand, saying,—

"This meeting is most remarkable; your letter of introduction to me and to our mess is from my brother."

"Bismillah, is it possible!"

"From my brother, Sir Harry Slingsby, of the Grenadier Guards. I am most happy to meet you, Captain Rioni, and with my friend, Captain Ramble of "Ours," will do all in my power to assist you."

Jack handed his brother's letter to me. It ran thus:—

MY DEAR JACK,—

Allow me to introduce to you and to your brother officers of the old —th Captain Osman Rioni (late of the—I am sorry to say it—Russian service), who has been for some time in London teaching our Life Guards the lance exercise, and who for the last three months has been the lion of the club-houses. He arrived among us a staid and respectable Mohammedan, very prone to sit cross-legged on the floor, to dip

his fingers in the gravy, and to grasp his knife if you gave him a slice of ham with his fowl; but he leaves us much addicted to balls, vingt un, champagne suppers, the polka, and the waltz. In short, in one season, we have polished him up in good style, and completed an education which had been somewhat neglected during his rural life among the Caucasus. You, perhaps, know the history of himself and his horse—for the morning papers get hold of everything. Conyers of the Blues offered him £500 for the nag; but he won't sell it for any known amount of the ready. Look at its legs and chest; I never saw such an animal! The captain has been an honorary member of our mess while in London—a hint this, for your fellows. He is now on his way home to the Kuban (wherever the devil that may be), and so you gentlemen of the Line in Gibraltar must look to the state of his exchequer, and pass him on to the next station, as Conyers has given him letters to some of the Rifles at Malta. I could easily have procured him a troop in our new Turkish contingent; but home he must and shall go, he says, and his own story will best let you know why. To-morrow our battalion will change its quarters, and commence the arduous march from St. John's Wood Barracks to those in Portman-street, and from thence to Trafalgar-square, and I shall follow in my cab; but you may see me ere long, for I am to sail with the next draught of ours for the Crimea, where the shiny splendour will be taken out of our Brahmins in the muddy trenches—ugh! Give my remembrance to Dick Ramble—ask him what his next book is to be about; and so, my dear Jack,
I remain, &c., &c.

The wishes of Sir Henry, and the efforts he and his brother officers of the Grenadier Guards (most of whom will remember the affair I allude to) made it imperative upon "Ours" not to be behind them in kindness to this stranger.

Jack and I promised to leave nothing undone to serve him on our arrival at Gibraltar, and assured him that we would see sufficient funds raised to send him either to Malta, or by steamer straight to Constantinople. His ignorance of English and Spanish had sadly puzzled the brain of our poor Circassian, who had landed with his horse and baggage at San Lucar, believing it to be Gibraltar, and had thus lost several days, and, what was of more consequence, much of his money; so that his mind was full of anxiety as to the future, and how his horse—his Zupi—for they seemed one, like a centaur, were to reach that mighty mountain range that lies between the Euxine and the Cape of Alpcheron; and which, with all its black forests, wild rocks, and snowy peaks was his beloved home; the altar of oriental independence—the barrier of the Eastern world against the encroaching Ruos.

We supped together in the cabin; and while the Spanish passengers were all smoking or asleep on the benches and lockers, we prevailed upon the Circassian, over a bottle of good wine, to inform us how he came to serve in the Russian cavalry, and why he declined Sir Harry's apparently advantageous offer of a Captain's commission in our Turkish contingent—a service for which he seemed so admirably fitted, and in which he might have won honour and distinction; at least such distinction as John Bull awards to those who are not on the staff, and have no ministerial interest.

He shook his head sadly, as I said something to this purpose, and bowing, gave me a pleasant smile.

“When you have heard me, you will understand more fully that the only place for me is my native land—that home which is now so far off, that when I trace upon a map the extent of sea and shore that lie between its hills and me, my heart grows faint and sick; but patience yet awhile, and one day I shall

stand again on the black rugged mountains of Kushaa, and see at my feet far down below, the fertile plains of Georgia and Mingrelia. Zupi will snuff the pure air of these Alpine peaks, and toss his proud mane on the wind; strong warriors, in their shirts of mail, will be riding by my side; the Albanian musket and the Tartar bow will be there, as we survey the long dark lines that mark upon the green summer fields, or it may be the winter snow, the columns of the Russian Emperor—columns that advance but to defeat and death; for in thousands, yea, hundreds of thousands, have they come to war against us, and to perish on the Circassian hills, until the very soil has been drenched in their blood, and fattened by the bones of men and horses! But my emotions carry me away, gentlemen, and I am forgetting my own story."

"Ah—yes, the story," said Jack, refilling the stranger's glass, and pushing the decanters towards me, while our new friend began, as nearly as I can remember, in the following words

CHAPTER XVI.

OSMAN RIONI

BISMILLAH! there is but one God, and Mohammed is His prophet; and on earth He is the powerful hand of Him who moveth the stars, who giveth light to the sun, and throweth darkness on the souls of the Russian unbelievers.

I am a Circassian, and, consequently, a Mohammedan, being a native of those districts of the Caucasus which have waged a ceaseless war with Russia—I mean that portion of our mountains which lies between Tamrook and the strong fortress of Anapa.

whose ramparts are washed by the waves of the Euxine Sea. We are all soldiers from our birth; thus, out of a population of three hundred thousand souls, our tribe can at any time muster fifty thousand warriors, well mounted on fleet Caucasian horses, and well armed, after our own fashion, in coats of mail, with musket, bow and pistol, sabre, dagger, and cartridge box; men, brave and handsome, and stubborn as their native rocks—men to whom danger is a pastime, and death but the door to Paradise.

Thus the mountaineers of the Caucasus, though mustering only about two millions of souls, have never stooped before a conqueror; but, in the face of all the world, have hurled back the legions of the Russian Empire, and maintained against it a struggle for fifty years—a struggle which, when our valour and disparity of numbers on one side are contrasted with the ferocity and overwhelming force on the other, has no parallel in the history of the modern world. The Russians name us the Tcherkesses, which means literally “those who bar the way;” for never did a foreign host leave their cursed foot-prints on the summits of the Caucasus.

Our mountains have become the ramparts of Turkey and of Persia, as our Declaration of Independence asserts; but they will become—unless we are supported by Western Europe—the avenue to both! We voluntarily submitted to the khans of the Crimea, and afterwards to the sultans of Constantinople; but, alas! we have lost the chiefs, whose banners could have summoned a hundred thousand warriors; yet now are we all, as one man, united in a deep and undying hatred of Russia! She has built forts on our territory, but dare her soldiers venture a foot beyond their cannon? In short, sirs, Circassia is free and independent; for neither the lying maps of Russia, which are spread throughout the world, and which mark the Caucasus as her territory, nor words, nor arts can enslave us. Arms may do

it, but the steel has never yet been forged, nor the cannon cast, that will make the proud Circassian stoop his crest before the barbarous Russ! Bismillah! The wild Tcherkesses are still free as the stormy wind that sweeps from Azov down the Euxine.

My father Mostapha was a chief; the head of one of those princely houses which are of Kabardian descent; his will was a law to his people; and the booty he took in his wars with the fierce Tartars and faithless Muscovites was the reward of their fidelity. We were Christians once—many ages ago—but it pleased God to open our eyes to the blessed precepts of Islam, and now we turn our faces to the Kaaba when we pray. Many nobles followed the banner of my father, whose territories extended along the base of the mountain steppes, from Marinskoi to the banks of the Kisselbash River; but one night, in the year 1807, the Russian General Goudivitch, with ten thousand cavalry, burst among us; stormed Anapa, and gave our men to the sword, our roofs to the flames, and our children to the wolf and the eagle.

My father fought long and nobly; the war was desperate; the Russians impaled their prisoners, and my father roasted his; but the tide of battle turned against us. All our possessions became a prey to the Russ, and our most beautiful damsels were given as wives or handmaidens to those brutal Cossacks, whom the merciless Goudivitch had brought from the banks of the Don. Azrael spread his dusky wings over our beautiful country; all the land was burned up, and black as night—being waste as a garden whose fruits have been gathered.

Then the new chain of forts was built along the Kuban. These marked the extended boundary of the Russian territory, and the land of my father was lost for ever; his bones lay unburied, where he had fallen, sword in hand, on the threshold of his own door, pierced by the same bayonets that slew his

faithful wife ; and their three children, myself and two brothers, sole heirs to his hopes and his harvest of vengeance, received the bread of charity from another Circassian tribe, the friendly Abassians, who dwell between the mountains and the Euxine.

Time rolled on, and from tending the flocks of the Abassians as shepherd boys, my brothers Selim and Karolyi grew strong and hardy men. The Abassians told us of our father's fate, and we longed to avenge it, and to recover our lost patrimony. Day after day we spent our time in acquiring the perfect use of arms, in talking of our hopes, our projects, and desires ; and often we looked with kindling eyes towards those mountains, from whose summits the Muscovite outposts were visible by the waters of the Kuban ; for dear as war and vengeance are the honour of his race and country to the proud and free Tcherkesse.

We could soon ride the wildest Arab steeds, and gallop them without bridle or saddle along giddy rocks, and through the untrodden forest. None surpassed us in the use of the sabre, the poniard, or the pistol ; few equalled Selim in handling the heavy Albanian musket ; while Karolyi was matchless in the use of the Circassian sling ; and in my hands, the bow was as unerring as the best Frankish rifle. I was older than my brave brothers by a few years, and thus became, in some wise, their preceptor. We were poor, but ardent and full of enthusiasm ; we worked, begged, and bartered—we were never satisfied until each of us was possessor of a fleet and active barb ; a bright steel coat of mail ; a helmet of tempered iron, such as our warriors wear, and which covers all the face, except the eyes and nose ; a curved sabre of keen Damascus steel ; an Albanian musket ; breast cases to receive our cartridges ; a sharp Circassian dagger, and a Tartar bow : and when thus accoutred, our hearts would swell with fierce emotion, as we reined up our steeds upon the hills above Anapa, and shook

our lances in defiance at the Russian steamers and frigates in the Euxine, while we longed for the time when the war-cry of Islam would ring among the hills, and we should behold the Sangiac Sheerif, the green banner of our confederated princes, with its three golden arrows and twelve white stars, unfurled against the barbarous Emperor Nicholas Romanoff.

We loved each other strongly, dearly, and devotedly, my two brothers and I, for we were alone in the world, the last of all our race. Being the eldest, they frequently importuned me to marry, that I might have children, and perpetuate our family; but I told them to remember that it was the custom of our people for a prince to wed the daughter of a prince; a noble to wed the daughter of a noble; a tocar to wed the daughter of a tocar; and the poor serf to wed the daughter of a serf. That I was neither prince nor tocar, noble nor serf, and could not marry, being too poor to wed one in the rank of my father, and too proud to stoop to a maiden beneath it. "Besides," I told them, "we have other duties to perform than espousing wives, which are ever a barrier to freedom of thought in peace, and bravery of action in war; for the blessed Prophet said, that wives and children were barriers to the performance of great deeds. God knoweth all things, and will direct the heart of Osman. I will not marry yet awhile, my brothers; for it is written that marriage disturbs a man from his duty—the wedded care for the things of this world, even as the unwedded care for those of heaven; and so we must watch and pray for our country, to defend her from the infidel Russians, who, like accursed locusts, blacken all the shores of the Kuban." Then my brothers Selim and Karolyi kissed me on both cheeks, applauding my resolution; and once more we shook our gauntleted hands in fierce menace towards the ramparts of Anapa.

But ere long there occurred circumstances which altered my resolution; for before the eyes of a

beautiful woman the strongest heart is weak as water.

One evening I was riding on the mountain slopes that overlook the waters of the Euxine. The last rays of evening were lingering on their peaks, and shedding a golden tint upon the waves that rolled away towards the cliffs of the Crimea. At my feet lay Sundjik Bay, glittering in the blaze of light that steeped sea, sky, and shore. The snow-white walls of Anapa, which crown rocks a hundred feet in height, were gleaming in the yellow sunshine, and grimly the black iron cannon peered through the stone embrasures, or over the ramparts of smoothly-shorn grass.

The flat-capped Russian sentinels, muffled in their gray great-coats, walked to and fro upon their posts; and each time they turned I saw their bayonets flash above the two square towers that guard the great arched entrance. Over all was the white flag with the Muscovite cross, but there was no wind to spread its folds upon the evening sky, and it hung about the staff listlessly and still; not a blade of grass stirred on the mighty plain of the Kuban, which spread far away towards the north, silent as a land of the dead. Under my iron helmet, grimly I surveyed Anapa and the rocks of Taman, and panted for the time when the standard of the twelve confederated princes of Circassia would be planted there, and when the black cross of the God-abandoned Russ would be torn down and steeped in the blood of its defenders.

My heart was full of fierce and fiery thoughts, when suddenly the cry of a woman, ringing upon the clear air of the hot summer eve, fell on my ear, and I reined up my horse—the same which I have now on board with me—my noble Zupi, to listen.

“Yani, Yani!” cried a despairing voice, which in our language means “mother, mother!”

I spurred Zupi over a hillock, and perceived four Russian soldiers of the Tenginski infantry, then gar-

risoning Anapa, dragging along a Circassian woman, who made no resistance, but cried piteously for mercy.

Uttering a shout of anger and defiance, I lowered my lance, and rushed upon them without a moment of hesitation.

They immediately relinquished their prey, who sank senseless on the ground, while they betook them to their muskets, crying,—

“Death to the Tcherkesse! down with the unbeliever!” and all four fired upon me at once; but God, the common father of all mankind (except the Russians) protected me. One bullet tore the plume from my helmet, another was turned by the fluted pockets which (in lieu of cartridge boxes) we wear across our breasts, the others whistled harmlessly past me, and before one of these soldiers could reload or club his weapon I was upon them. The first two I speared, and hurled to the earth like ripe pumpkins; a third, I trampled under the hoofs of Zupi; and afterwards slew at my leisure; the fourth sprung over a ruined wall and escaped me, but for a few minutes only, as I pinned him to the earth by an arrow, but he rose and staggered away. This man was named Archipp Ose-poff, of whom more anon.

I now dismounted, and, throwing the bridle over the neck of my docile Zupi, approached the insensible female I had rescued.

She was attired in the richest fashion of our Circassian damsels. A robe of costly silk open in front, and confined at her slender waist by a glittering girdle of silver; trowsers of the finest pink muslin; and the red slippers on her pretty feet were embroidered with gold; a turban, composed of the most delicate shawl, fell in graceful folds over her small and beautiful neck, and a large veil of lace entwined with silver, enveloped her whole person, and floated like a white mist about her.

This I dared to draw aside that the air might play

upon her face, and so revive her. Oh, Mahmoud resoul allah! the beauty of our women is proverbial. and as you know, gentlemen, the world acknowledges it; but how shall I describe the loveliness of this Circassian damsel, who proved to be the flower of the Abassian maids? Her complexion was of the purest white, the result of excessive delicacy, and perhaps of that seclusion which was necessary to conceal her from the prying eyes of the Russian soldiers, or of the trading Turks; and this paleness of skin, when contrasted with the blackness of her massive braids of hair, was almost startling. Her eyes were also dark, but beautiful and dove-like in expression, for a languishing gentleness was in every feature, and over all her form. She was but a girl; yet so full, round, and tall, that for the house of the sultan I had seen many thousand piastres paid for an odalisque, who was unfit to kiss even her slipper. Basilia was among the most beautiful of our Circassian maids, or, as Schamyl calls them, the daughters of the rocks and streams.

She soon recovered on perceiving that she was free, and that the protecting arm of a Circassian was around her; but she tremblingly drew the veil over her face, as I led her by the hand from the spot where her late capturers lay dead on the sward, with their blood congealing beneath them.

"It pleased the Prophet to send me to your aid, fair damsel," said I; "are there any other means by which I can serve you?"

For a time she could only reply by incoherencies and with profuse thanks, for her mind was bewildered by terror and agitation.

"Fear nothing, maiden," said I, "for a strong hand and a stout heart are at your service. I am Osman, whose people dwelt by the Kisselbash River; you have heard of me, perhaps?"

"Yes, Aga——"

"Alas! no Aga am I; but a poor outcast, whose

sword and bow are his sole inheritance ; yet you have heard of me ?”

“ Yes, and of your two brothers, Selim and Karolyi, for to them and to you the people look as leaders when war is made on the Muscovites.”

“ As soon it must be, maiden ; and then I hope to see the ramparts of yonder fortress of Anapa flung into the Euxine. But may I ask your name ?”

“ Basilia,” she replied, in a low voice, and drew her veil yet closer.

“ Basilia, the daughter of Abdallah ibn Obba, the rich merchant of Soudjack Kaleh, who is said to be making pyramids of gold by trading with Tartars of the Crimea, and exporting from Sampsoon the copper of Tocat, and the silks and fruit of Amasia ?”

“ I am the daughter of Abdallah, and, rich though he is, I assure you he is yet poor in his own idea ; for neither the Prophet nor the santons can bound my father’s idea of wealth ; but convey me to him, and for the good deed of to-day, he will reward you, noble Osman, by the most gorgeous suit of armour, the richest weapons, and the noblest horse a Tcherkesse warrior ever possessed.”

“ I seek no reward ; let the horse and armour be given to some poor patriot who is without them ; I seek no reward, Basilia,” I continued, with enthusiasm, “ beyond your own approbation and the memory that I have this day done a kind, and, it may be, a gallant deed, in rescuing you from the fate which those sons of the devil had in store for you ; but how came you into their hands ?”

“ We had gone on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Santon Seozeres among the mountains, when we fell in with these marauders ; my father’s aged hands were unable to protect me ; he was struck to the earth ; his reverend beard was spat on, and his turban torn off and flung in his face, while I was dragged from the arms of my terrified attendants ; but see, Osman

Rioni, they are now approaching us, and behold my father."

She uttered a cry of joy, and rushed to meet the old merchant Abdallah ibn Obba, who now came forward on horseback, with rage, alarm, and grief in his eyes, and his great turban awry. He corroborated her story, saying, that having a large ship, which had long been delayed on her voyage from Stamboul, he had paid a propitiatory visit to the tomb of Seozeres, the most famous and powerful of Circassian Santons, and the object of especial reverence by all merchants, seamen, and dwellers on the coast ; for the waves and winds are reputed to be under his subjection, and the storm and the thunderbolt are alike at his disposal ; thus we celebrate his festival in the early days of spring, and when on this mission had Abdallah and his daughter fallen among the Russians.

He gave me innumerable promises of remembrance and regard (which he took especial care to forget), and made his horse curvet several times over the dead Russians, which seemed to console him mightily, and smoothing his ruffled beard, he muttered,—

"Death to them ! death to them ! the unbelievers, the dogs, the infidels ! They shall be destroyed like the wicked people of Noah and of Lot, and like the army of Abrahah, lord of the Elephant ; and their false gods and pretended saints of brass and of silver shall perish with them ! Unless a fear of the Russ prevent thee, Osman Rioni, I shall be glad to see thee in Soudjack Kaleh, where a carpet and pipe, with a cup of such coffee as Basilia alone can prepare, will be at the service of her preserver ; and so, God and Merissa take thee into their holy keeping."

With these words we separated ; the old merchant and his daughter remounted on her own horse, rode slowly away until they disappeared in the deepening shades of evening ; while I remained motionless, and watching them, with a wild, sad beating in my heart,

for the face of Basilia seemed yet before me, and her voice was lingering in my ear.

She was gone, but my soul went with her.

Full, round, and red as a Tartar shield, the moon rose above the Isle of Taman to light the waters of the Euxine; the mountains flung their black shadows upon each other; the lurid glow-worm glittered on the dewy grass, and the snakes began to hiss among the long reeds; while the fierce vultures hovered in the starry sky, with their keen eyes fixed on the grim banquet I had made for them; and I heard their hoarse croak of impatience, for I lingered long on the spot where Abdallah and his daughter had left me.

Several days passed away. Men spoke much of the coming struggle with the Russians; my brave brothers were as usual training their horses, tempering their weapons, casting bullets, and pointing arrows; I alone was silent, and full of soft, sad thoughts—melancholy, happy, and anxious by turns; for my whole breast was filled by the image of Basilia.

I visited her father by stealth, for this old man was one who had temporised with the Russians, and paid them a tribute that he might dwell in peace under the cannon of Soudjack; but I found him gloomy, thoughtful, and discontented; his ship had been stranded on the Isle of Serpents, in the Black Sea, and sunk with all her crew, and what was of more importance to Abdallah, with her rich bales of Indian silks, of cashmere shawls, of amber pipes, and other valuables with which she was freighted. This isle, the only one in the Euxine, is infested by serpents of enormous size, say our voyagers. These guard its boundless treasures and devour all who attempt to land; thus Abdallah ibn Obba abandoned in grief all hope of recovering a vestige of his property.

He received me morosely, and after smoking a pipe and drinking with him a cup of coffee, which we received from the white, gentle hands of Basilia, who was enveloped as before in her veil of lace, I departed,

happy that I had seen but the tips of her dear fingers once again; happy that I had been under the roof of her father, and happy that for one brief hour I had shared a corner of his carpet, and breathed the same atmosphere with one so beautiful and so well-beloved as she.

Again and again I came to visit Abdallah; for alas! I no longer sighed for the unfurling of our green standard against the Russ; I only counted the days and hours till again I should visit the house of the merchant at Soudjack.

Secluded as the old man kept Basilia—for he deemed her his last and most valuable estate—a piece of property on which he could at any time realise a thousand piastres in the Stamboul market—we had nightly interviews; for what are the difficulties that love cannot surmount? I had discovered that her chamber window opened into old Abdallah's garden; its wall was easily crossed, and then three notes on my lute were the signal which brought Basilia to me; but she was beyond arm's length, and I never dared to climb, though, had the wealth of Ormuz been mine, I had given it all to have kissed but once her hand. Yet, until she was bestowed upon me by her father, what hope had I of ever doing so?

In the wild and half-civilised countries of the East, a lover invests his mistress with a thousand imaginary attributes, such as a lover of Europe or the West can never do. The seclusion in which we keep our women, the danger and risk of approaching or even speaking of them to their nearest relations, all enhance the charm, the secrecy, and the romance of an Oriental love; and thus, with such a heart as mine, it became an all-absorbing and engrossing passion, in which to be without hope was to be without life. Hourly I exclaimed to myself,—

“Bismillah! oh, Osman, happy thou to win a heart like hers!” for Basilia responded as warmly as she dared, or as I could have desired.

Nightly we conversed in whispers, and had our interchange of love-letters; not that poor Basilia wrote, or that I then could write; alas, no! Our letters were simply flowers, tied together with a ribbon, and in this symbolical language we conferred. It is a language lovers easily learn, and the Circassian sooner than all. I ransacked the bazaars of the Armenians and Muscovites for gaudy trinkets and perfumes, as presents for Basilia; and fearless of the Russ, I daily caracoled my horse—my Zupi—before her father's house, that she might see me attired in the glittering arms and splendid costume of a Circassian cavalier; and happy was I—oh, how happy! if but once I saw the muslin-veiled form of my beautiful Basilia. At her feet I laid the shawls of Cashmere and the beads of Bokhara. She gave me a waist-belt embroidered by herself, and a morocco breast-pocket to hold my cartridges, in return.

Summoning up courage, I one day put on my most splendid habiliments; my coat of mail, which shone like water in the sun; a helmet of steel, damascened by my own hands; and I armed myself with weapons which, like every Tcherkesse warrior, I had tempered and ornamented with silver and precious stones, all by my own skill. Bathed, perfumed, and anointed, I rode up to the door of Abdallah ibn Obba; and while my heart trembled and died away within me, and my colour came and went like that of a woman under the bowstring, I asked his daughter in marriage. He heard me in ominous silence.

“May God be with thee, Abdallah,” said I.

“With thee be God,” said he, and paused again, on which I timidly rehearsed all I had said.

The old merchant, who was seated on a rich carpet, with his legs folded under him, and a split reed, ink-horn, and piles of papers and accounts on one side of him, and his fragrant narguillah on the other, heard me without moving a muscle of his solemn visage; and after smoking for some time, drew the

yellow mouthpiece from his mustachioed lips, and shaking his bushy beard, replied to me, slowly,—

“May you be saluted, O Osman Rioni! No—no, Osman, this cannot be! The son of a prince weds a prince’s daughter, even as a slave weds the daughter of a slave. Thus, the rich give their children in marriage only to the rich, and thou, Osman, art very poor. Remember, that this daughter may yet be a mine of wealth to me.”

I knew what the old wretch meant by these words—the market of Stamboul—and my blood ran cold.

“Her beauty,” he resumed, “is a miracle, and her birth was also a miracle; hence she was born for great purposes, and may yet be a source of delight to him who wears the sword of Omar, our Lord the Sultan Abdul Medjid—who can tell? She was born of my first wife, Isha; when she was old, stricken in years, and hopelessly barren, on seeing a hen feed her chickens one day, her heart was moved; she wept and prayed the holy Prophet to give her a little child in her old age, whereupon she had Basilia in the fulness of time; so thus I tell thee, she was born for great things. Enough, enough, Osman Rioni, go thy ways, for thou art very poor.”

“True, father,” said I, while my heart became chilled with despair; “I am poor, and my brothers Selim and Karolyi are also poor, for we have no inheritance but the name of our father, and what we can wrench in combat from the enemies of our country, and for every meal of food we have to fight the convoys of the Russ on the mountain, or the wild beasts in the forest; but a time is at hand when I shall have all my father’s patrimony again, when the forts of the Kuban shall lie in ruins by its shore, while the wolf shall batten on the bones of their defenders. A time shall come when I may ride from the grassy steppes of Marinskoi to the reedy flow of the Kisselbash River, lord of all the land my father

bequeathed to me, with this sword, when the Russian bayonets were clashing in his heart!"

"God is great," replied the merchant, calmly: "when that time comes return, and seek my daughter, but not till then."

He replaced the amber tube of the narguillah in his mouth, waved his hand to indicate that he wished to hear no more on the subject, and dismissed me, with a heart swollen by grief and mortification. I felt how low the son of Mostapha was fallen when a miserable trader despised his alliance! God of Mohammed, had we come to this?

As I rode slowly back to the poor village where with my brothers I dwelt on the hills above Anapa, I revolved a thousand schemes of daring and conquest; for Basilia was now to me a light—a star—a guide; but between us I saw the dark battalions and the strong ramparts of the abhorred Russians, and worse than all, the cunning and the avarice of her selfish father. Could I repel one, or bound the other?

When riding slowly on I saw a raven in my path, and shuddering at the bird of ill omen, turned aside, for I knew it was a sign of coming evil; because there is an old tradition in the countries of the East, that Cain, after committing fratricide, became sorely troubled in mind, and bore about with him for many days the dead body of his brother, until Heaven taught him how to bury it, by the example of a raven, which after killing another in his presence dug a little pit for it by beak and talon; and so scraping a hole with his hands, Cain interred his brother at the foot of a palm, whose branches heretofore erect drooped mournfully for ever after. Then the murderous raven which had perched itself on a branch thereof flew away to Adam, and croaked huskily in his ear that his youngest born was now slain and buried, and from that hour the raven has been a bird of evil augury to all the world. And now my heart became

a prey to a thousand dark and gloomy forebodings. The bird had not come to me for nought.

I prayed Merissa, the mother of God, to take Basilia under her protection, for, like the Christians, we believe in the intercession of a woman, though, perhaps, her name is but a remnant of the faith that was first preached to the Circassians before the banner of the blessed Prophet swept the gods of error from the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Night was closing as I ascended the mountain, when suddenly from a gorge there rose that wild and terrible yell which is the war-cry of Circassia; and led by Schamyl, the conquering, the holy Murid Schamyl, a host of mounted warriors, all clad in shirts of shining steel and round helmets, armed with lance and musket, bow and sabre, each with a bag of millet and bottle of skhou slung at his saddle for service, dashed their fleet horses through the narrow way, and above their heads waved the green standard of the confederated princes with its three golden arrows and twelve white stars—the Sangiac Sheerif—the sacred banner of our people, for green is the colour of the Prophet.

Selim and Karolyi were among them, and they sprang to my side with joy and ardour.

A vast Russian army of horse, foot, and artillery, they told me, had just passed the shores of the Kuban, and entered among the mountains; Schamyl, the holy murids who devote themselves to death, and all our confederated princes, had summoned the land to battle, and every man between the straits of Yenikale and the Mingrelian frontier was in arms for Circassia. Thus opened the Christian year 1840, so memorable to us by the capture of all the frontier forts of the Russians by our arms, but chiefly those of Mikhailov and Nikhailovska.

The excitement, the glory, and the splendour of our mountain host equipped for war, with the hopes of conquest and of triumph, filled my soul with such

ardour and exultation that my emotion nearly overcame me. The hope of winning back in this war, if it was successful, the land, the home, and the grave of my forefathers, and with these the flower of the Abassian maids for my bride, made me pant for the hour of battle with such ardour as never bridegroom awaited the unveiling of his new-made wife.

The great Dervish Mohammed Mansoor, from the misty land of Daghestan, had foretold our triumph when he died at Anapa, and we never doubted we should be victorious.

Over my father's fugitive people a command was assigned me by the confederated princes; my brothers, Selim and Karolyi, rode by my side; all who followed us shared our ardour, and we were brave even to ferocity: thus, pouring down from the snow-capped Alps of the Caucasus towards the hosts of the Russ, then blackening and desolating the banks of the Kuban, while their fleets of three deckers and steamers scared the golden dolphins from our shores, we commenced the desperate war of 1840.

I was full of delicious hope, and the last words of Basilia, for I had visited her in secret before we marched, were ever in my ears,—

“Hope for everything from Heaven, O Osman. The angels of Mohammed will deliver you from the swords of the Russians, and like all, my beloved, who fight against the spirit, they shall wither and perish!”

Her prophetic words inspired me with new ardour.

“Farewell, Basilia,” I exclaimed, as I grasped the mane of Zupi; “we go to teach those Muscovite liars who mark our country in their maps that the Circassians have no masters save God and the Prophet.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HUSSARS OF TENGINSKI

How we swept the land of Kisliar, continued the Circassian captain; how we baffled the foe beneath the towers of Dargo; how Schamyl the Immortal did prodigies of valour at Unsorilla and destroyed the army of Count Woronzoff, the Governor of New Russia, one hundred and fifty thousand in number, whose bones yet lie in the forest of Itzkeri; how we fought with desperation, neither asking nor giving quarter, and how we hurled the Russians from the slopes of the Caucasus back upon the shores of the Kuban, where they lay unburied save by the jaws of the wolf and eagle, torn and disembowelled by hungry dogs, all Europe knows full well; and how successive armies, full of barbarous pride and military and religious enthusiasm, horsemen, artillery, and infantry — hussars and Cossacks, Kurds and Tartar hordes, who had stooped their necks to Russia's iron yoke, entered the valleys of Circassia, valleys which seem but dark chasms or fissures where the branches of the Koissons roar and leap from rock to rock in northern Daghestan, and there they perished, too, beneath the bullet and the arrow, the spear and sling of the unconquerable Tcherkesses. It was my brother Selim who slew General Woinoff; it was Karolyi who stormed the redoubts and spiked his cannon; and it was I who hewed off the head of the gallant soldier Passok, and bore it for three days on my spear.

In this year of the Christians, 1840, I commanded that portion of the Circassian troops which besieged the Russians in the fort of Mikhailov. They de-

fended themselves with the blind fury of men who foresaw their doom was death! Selim pressed them with three thousand men on one side; Karolyi, with the same number, pressed them on the other; while I, with a chosen band of four thousand archers, slingers, and musketeers, plied them from every quarter with incessant missiles. Selim cut off the sluices which supplied them with water, and Karolyi stormed their outworks, tore down their stockades, and beheaded every defender whom they caught by the lasso.

But Heaven has put much valour into the hearts of these infidels; hence, though reduced to the verge of starvation (having picked the bones of their last horse, and stewed their boot-tops and leather shakoes), their commander, Ivan Carlovitch, colonel of the Tenginski Hussars, resolved to make one gallant effort to escape, for his soldiers had with them several old standards, which the Russians regard as almost holy.

His garrison was composed of the 37th or Tenginski Grenadiers; the 38th or Novoginski Regiment, which carried the famous banner of St. George, the same that had been with their predecessors at the passage of the Alps, and which waved on the field of Trebbia, where they fought under Suvaroff. He had also two battalions of the Imperial Guard, whose tattered and shot-riven standards had waved on many a bloody plain, and been clenched in the dying grasp of many a gallant man.

Their desire of preserving these trophies was only second to the hope of escape; for the standard is ever the palladium of a regiment, even as the National Insignia are the palladium of a free people, and, as such, should be preserved from degradation.

Perceiving that, fearless of his cannon—those terrors of the simple Circassians, who name them the great pistols of the Czar—I had made every disposition for an assault, which must have been successful, the valiant Ivan Carlovitch led out his shattered gar-

rison among us, sword in hand; and, favoured by a dark and tempestuous night, escaped with a few, but a few only; for by sabre and by musket we made a fearful slaughter among the soldiers of the Novoginski Regiment, and taking their famous banner of St. George, tore it to fragments, and spitting upon these, trampled them to the earth in blood and mire.

Thanks to the Prophet and to my coat of mail, uncounted balls and bayonets touched me without harm. Above the roar of that red musketry which lit the darkness with its streaky gleams; above the howling of the wind, which tore through every mountain gorge; above the cheers of the desperate, and the shrieks of the dying, the wild, shrill, and unearthly war-cry of the Circassians ascended to the throne of Mohammed; and the approach to the breach was like the bridge of hell, as we rushed through the battered gates to take possession of the fortress; but at the moment that the 'enceinte,' or interior wall which surrounded the place, and was composed of bastions faced with brick, was crowded by our flushed and exulting warriors, a tremendous explosion was heard; the earth gaped, and rocked, and rent; then it rose beneath our feet; a broad, hot, scorching blaze of fire surrounded me, and blown up by a concealed mine of powder, the whole fort of Mikhailov, with more than two thousand Circassians, was torn from its foundations, and swept on the whirlwind along the mountain slopes.

Struck down by a stone in the moment of victory, I became senseless, and remember no more of that night of horrors!

Heaven, I have said, has put great valour into the hearts of these unbelievers.

Archipp Ossepoff, the same grenadier of the Teninginski Regiment whom I had wounded by an arrow, and from whom I had rescued Basilia, volunteered to remain behind his comrades; and in order to prevent the fort from being of service to the confederated

princes, laid his hands solemnly on the standard of St. George, and promised to Ivan Carlovitch, that he would fire the magazine—a noble act of self-sacrifice and military enthusiasm. This man of course perished with Mikhailov, and with our people; but in order to commemorate this act of valour and devotion, the Emperor Nicholas ordained that his name should be continued on the muster-roll of the Tenginski Grenadiers; that it should be called daily on parade, and that on the sergeant summoning “Archipp Ossepoff,” the next grenadier on the list should answer—

“Dead at Mikhailov for the glory of Russia!”

When I recovered, I found myself lying on the hill-side, many yards from the fort, the site of which resembled the crater of the volcano; for it seemed as if the powder had rent, torn, and blackened the bosom of the earth, in its efforts to efface the fort for ever. The free soft wind of the Caucasus was passing over the ruins; above me the sky was bright, and blue, and sunny; the birds were twittering among the mangled bodies of the slain; and about those ghastly heaps, or between their piles of arms and limbered field-pieces, the Russian soldiers (whom the flight of our people had left in possession of the locality) were laughing and singing, as they drained their canteens of sour quass, and prepared to cook their breakfasts, and to bury the dead.

Around us, the scenery was beautiful; there were summer woods in all their heavy foliage; the terraced vineyards of lighter green, screened by the dense and wiry pine; little cottages and pretty mosques, with gilded minars shining in the sun; bright streams dancing down the rocks; the sea, blue as the sky and rippling gently in the wind; while in the back-ground of all, rose hills piled up on hills, until their steepes reached Heaven, and every peak was capped with pure white snow, or tipped by a golden gleam.

Close by me a group of Russian officers were seated around one, who, by his dark green uniform,

his heavy silver epaulettes and jack-boots; his varnished leather helmet surmounted by an eagle; his enormous mustache and cruel expression of eye, I knew to be Ivan Carlovitch; and I lay still and feigning death, believing that my fate would be sealed, if life was discovered in me.

They were loud in their praises of the Circassian leader—myself—and expressed a great desire to capture me; others added their less friendly hopes that I had perished in the explosion.

"It is fortunate, however," said Carlovitch, "that we have taken his two brothers, Selim and Karolyi; they, at least, have a long march before them towards the north; and, believe me, that among the snows there, with a chain to drag, and the occasional prick of a Cossack lance in the rear, their hot rebellious blood will soon be cooled in Siberia, and rendered mild as commissariat quass."

Under their shaggy beards the officers laughed at this poor joke, which made my heart almost die within me, for it acquainted me, that my two brothers, Selim and Karolyi, were captives, and that Siberia would be their doom.

A soldier now approached to announce that the body of Archipp Ossepoff had been found, shattered, scorched, and sorely mangled, but still recognisable by the medals which he had won in the Polish war.

"Then let him be buried apart from all the rest," said Carlovitch, "with all honour, and let a cross mark the spot; but first, let us put all these fellows who are lying about here under ground, before the sun attains its noon-day heat."

While lying there, receiving an occasional kick from the passing soldiers, who had long since stripped me of my splendid arms, armour, and ornaments, how terrible were my thoughts when the fierce, rough, and merciless Cossacks proceeded to open a trench beside me, and dug it deep to receive the dead. I endeavoured to stifle reflection, believing that my last

hour had come; and after praying—for prayer is the pillar of religion, even as the sword is the true key of paradise—I bent my thoughts upon Basilia, who was far away at Soudjack Kaleh, and seated then perhaps in her rose garden, fanning herself with feathers, and weeping for the poor Osman she would never again behold on earth.

At last the grave was finished, and one by one the dead were flung therein, and laid in rows head and foot alternately; how heavily they fell, with their lifeless limbs and clanking accoutrements! Suddenly I felt myself seized by the neck and heels, and before I could utter a sound, they flung me into that ghastly trench on the gashed and bloody heap below, and then the shovelled earth flew fast over me.

“Stop—halt!” cried Ivan Carlovitch, who was sitting on the sward close by, smoking a magnificent pipe; “by St. George, that uppermost Tcherkesse is alive yet!”

“A matter easily repaired, my colonel!” said a Russian, raising his shovel like a battle-axe to cleave my head.

“Beware, I say!” thundered Carlovitch, and at his voice the bearded soldiers cowered like slaves before a king; “fling him out, lay him on the sward, and bring here a canteen of quass.”

This sharp, bitter draught revived me, and my native pride coming to my aid, I stood erect, and boldly confronted the imperialist.

“Who the devil are you?” he asked.

I replied, proudly,—

“Osman Rioni, the son of Mostapha. I might have concealed my rank, but I scorn to lie, even unto a race of liars.”

Joy flashed in the cruel and cunning eyes of Carlo, vitch at this announcement; his surprise and satisfaction at the importance of his third prisoner were too great to leave space for anger at my speech. He smiled, and said,—

“ Tcherkesse, your wants and your wounds, if you have any, shall be faithfully and kindly attended to ; when in better humour I shall see you again, having a little message to you from the emperor. Take him away.’

I was conducted to an ancient tomb, under the dome of which I found a Cossack guard, surrounding my two brothers Selim and Karolyi, with several other Circassians, who were all suffering more or less from wounds or scorches in the explosion. All were dejected, and my appearance among them increased their unhappiness. We communed in whispers, and formed our plans for flight on the first opportunity.

All that night we remained in the cold and dreary tomb, which before morning some of our poor companions exchanged for an actual grave, for they died of their undressed wounds ; but about sunrise, we were drawn out by the Cossacks, who truncheoned us with their lances, driving us like a herd of cattle ; and then their pioneers proceeded to dig a grave under the dome, which was the resting-place of an ancient king, a proceeding which we beheld with horror, for every strict Mussulman deems sacred for ever the little spot of earth which forms the last resting-place of a departed being.

Then the sound of muffled drums rolled upon the wind and the wail of the Muscovite dead march, as the funeral of Archipp Ossepoff approached ; the solemnity of the scene impressed us deeply, and we forgot that it was by the mingled treachery and stern devotion of this determined soldier we had lost Mikhailov and our liberty together.

Six grenadiers of the Tenginski Regiment bore on their shoulders the coffin, the lid of which was off ; a veil of fine linen covered the body, which was dressed in uniform, with cross-belts, boots, gloves, epaulettes of red worsted and copper medals. The head was borne forward, not the feet, as in other countries. Then came four soldiers, bearing the

coffin lid, on which lay the leather helmet, the musket, and knapsack of the deceased; then followed the regiment of Tenginski Grenadiers, marching with their arms reversed, and preceded by a grand military band of brass trumpets and muffled drums. In front of all marched a priest of the Russian Greek Church, attired in magnificent vestments of muslin, gold, and embroidery. His aspect was venerable; his white beard was full and flowing; he chaunted as he went, and sprinkled frankincense upon the path.

A prayer, a roll upon the drums, and a flourish of instruments with three volleys closed the ceremony, and there lies Archipp Ossepoff in the tomb of a Circassian prince; but his memory as a brave grenadier is still cherished, as I have related, by the orders of the emperor, and in the traditions of his comrades. God rest that gallant spirit; he died for his country, even as I would have died for mine.

Pining for freedom and for the presence of Basilia, dreading I scarcely knew what—but banishment to Siberia more than anything else, for that had been but a living death and a separation for ever from my country and my love—three dreary months rolled over me, and with my two brothers I still found myself a prisoner with the Russian army of the Caucasus, which marched along the left bank of the Kuban towards the Sea of Azov, and consequently nearer to my home.

One day Colonel Carlovitch sent for me, and again his face wore that deep and cunning smile which so closely resembled a leer; for his eyes were cold and snaky, even as his heart was stern and cruel.

“I have sent for you, my valiant Tcherkesse,” said he, politely, “to make you a tempting offer from our beneficent father the emperor. It is this. If you will enter the Russian service, all your father’s possessions from Marinskoi to the mouth of the Kisselbash River will be restored to you, with the title of prince—neither of which can you ever hope to regain by the

impious sword you have drawn against the house of Romanoff and the cause of Holy Russia."

I rejected the offer with the scorn it merited, and reminded the tempter, in the words of our "Declaration of Independence," how many of our children had been stolen; how many of our princes had thus been lured away; how many sons of nobles taken as hostages, and then butchered in cold blood; how many noble houses had been reduced and crushed by Russian treason and by Russian treachery; and lifting up my hands, while I turned my face towards Mecca, I was about to take a solemn vow, when interrupting me, he said, with an icy smile,—

"Enough, Osman Rioni—swear not—'t is needless! To-morrow you and your brothers will commence the long, long march to Siberia."

At these words my soul trembled, and my head fell upon my breast. The Russian officer still smiled and continued to polish the eagle on his helmet, with his leather glove, while whistling the popular waltz of the Duchess Olga.

Siberia!

With that name, hope, love, liberty, my country and her cause sank, and snow-covered wastes, with chains and stripes, despair and death, rose up before me.

If once I reached Siberia, I should live the life of the hopeless, and die the death of the despairing; and my brothers—my poor brothers! The alternative was terrible, but in the Russian service we should daily have chances of escape to our native mountains; so I accepted his offer in the name of myself, Selim, and Karolyi.

"I knew that you would think better of it," said Carlovitch, sitting down in his tent, and writing a memorandum; "thenceforward from this day, you are a captain in the Tenginski Hussars, and your brothers shall be the lieutenants of your troop. Allow me to present you with a horse which was taken at Mi-

khailov. You shall fight against the Tartars, not your own people; but to-morrow I have a piece of service to propose to you. Come here after morning parade or at noon, and I shall tell you all about it—mean time adieu.”

With a heart full of bitterness I left him, and careless of the Cossacks, who still watched me, I took up a handful of gravel and flung it towards his painted tent, saying, as Mohammed did at Bedr,—

“A curse upon thee, Muscovite—and a curse be on every hair of the cur that begot thee! May thy face be confounded for ever!”

Whichever way I turned, his cold smile seemed before me; but when I reached the tent in which my brothers were confined, great was my pleasure to find my favourite charger Zupi led up to the door by a hussar, and I kissed and embraced my old friend, for we Mussulmen deem the horse as the noblest of animals next to man; and the Koran says, that the beasts which traverse earth and air are creatures like ourselves—they are all written in the Book, and shall appear at the last day; so when I die, I hope to take my faithful Zupi with me to paradise, even as Ezra took his ass, after she had ceased to bray for a hundred years.

Like myself, at the first proposition of taking service under the abhorred emperor, my brothers were full of fierce scorn; but when I had calmly placed my views before them, showing that we had no alternative but military service, with its chances of escape on one hand, and perpetual slavery, with its stripes on the other, they condescended to accept the lieutenantcies of my troop; and the next day—oh, may it be accursed!—saw us attired in the green uniform of the Tenginski Hussars, and on parade with Menschikoff's division of the Caucasian army.

In camp around us were bivouacked thousands of the Russian infantry in their long great-coats and flat round caps; the Cossacks of the Don with their

fleet, rough, and active horses, and all armed with long lances; the horse regiments of Tchernemorski glittering with jewels and embroidery, and the Imperial Guard in their magnificent uniform. Around us rang the clank of the armourer's anvil, the springing of ramrods and fixing of flints; the limbering of artillery and powder-waggons; the galloping of aides-de-camp; the hewing down of palisades, and the plaiting up of fascines, all of which told us of preparations making for the subjugation of our country, and we were amid it all, attired in the Russian uniform!

At noon I sought the tent of Carlovitch.

"My colonel," said I, veiling my boiling hatred under a calm exterior, as with a solemn salaam I raised a hand to the front of my fur hussar cap; "you had a duty to propose to me?"

"Yes, my stubborn Tcherkesse; I am glad to find that you have so easily learned the task of obedience, as without it an army sinks into a rabble. Well, the duty is this. There is an old fellow at Soudjack Kaleh, who for some time past has traded with the Tartars in various ways, and latterly with Turks in salted fish and pretty women, both of which commodities he exports largely to Stamboul, to the ancient city of Trebizonde, and to Sinope."

My heart began to leap at these words.

"You mean Abdallah ibn Obba."

"The same; but you start—do you know him?"

"Intimately," said I; "and your purpose, O son of a slave!" I had almost added.

"Well, Captain Rioni, this respectable old Tcherkesse is now bargaining for the sale of a cargo of slave girls for the Turkish market, and a small Stambouli craft, which has long baffled the pursuit of our steam corvettes and the row-boats of our Kreposts, is now concealed in some creek near Mezip. Unfortunately all our vessels are over on the Crimean side, otherwise they would soon have found those Turkish

swine, who come to steal the subjects of our father the emperor ”

Carlovitch gave another of his cold smiles, for he perceived how my hot Circassian blood revolted on hearing my people called the subjects of his emperor. I asked haughtily,—

“ Your orders, Colonel Carlovitch ? ”

“ You will select fifty of the Tenginski Hussars, and as you and your brothers must know the country well, search every creek and cranny of the coast until the Turkish ship is found. She will be safely beached somewhere, and when discovered, burn her ; cut the throats of the Turks, and bring the cargo of girls here. You shall have a couple of the prettiest for your trouble. The daughter of old Abdallah is among them—Basilia, commonly known as the flower of the Abassians. Archipp Ozepoff nearly brought me that girl once before, but some rascal pierced him by an arrow. Take especial care of her, for I am resolved that no great bison of a Turk shall ever call her slave. No, no, her bright eyes will sparkle all the brighter among the green uniforms and silver epaulettes of our Tenginski Hussars. See to all this ; you march in an hour, and till you return, farewell.”

Taking up a pen he resumed a dispatch which my arrival had interrupted ; and after standing for some time, overwhelmed by confusion and the misery of my own thoughts, I withdrew to the foot of a tree, and sat down to reflect on the strange duty I had to perform, and the startling tidings I had just heard.

The image of my beautiful Basilia—for I assure you, gentlemen, that the Circassian maid is the most perfect and lovely creation of God—a prisoner, a slave on board of a slave ship, and consigned a helpless victim of the lust of the licentious Osmanli filled my soul with a horror so great that I forgot my present situation in my anxiety to discover this secret ship, to free her, and to put to the edge of the sword

all who were concerned in a transaction so infamous. I saw the whole affair now. The loss of the rich argosy on the Isle of Serpents had brought the difficulties of Abdallah to a crisis, and to retrieve his broken fortune he had sold his only daughter to the Turks! I invoked the curse of the Prophet, and of the twelve Imaums on his avarice; and now my only fear was great that the Turks might launch their boat and escape me: thus it was that with an ardour such as I never thought to feel at the head of Russian troops, I rode from the camp at the head of fifty hussars, with my two brothers by my side; and we galloped along the sea-shore, with all our brilliant appointments glittering in the splendour of the setting sun of Asia.

"Basilia, my pure, my beautiful! this night may make thee mine," thought I; "one stroke of a sabre may give what thy father would not have sold to me, perhaps, for a million of piastres."

I am ashamed to own that our Circassian beauties too often exchange with joy the penury of their fathers' cottages and the hardships of their frugal mountain homes, for the luxury and delight of the Stambouli Kiosks and seraglios. From early childhood their ears are filled, and their warm imaginations fired, with ideas of the riches and pleasure of these places, and by the stories of their mothers, or more generally their aunts, who have returned (when their Osmanli lords grew weary of their faded charms) loaded with magnificent jewels, with purses of sequins, and wardrobes of the richest stuffs the world can produce, and with many a tale to tell of the distinguished part they had played by their native superiority of intellect over the ponderous and dreamy Asiatic. To purchase our girls the Turkish vessels row by night along the shore, and seek some wooded creek where they lie concealed from the steamers and cruisers of the Russian Black Sea fleet, and from the squadrons of Cossack row-boats attached to the Kre-

posts; then the bargain is concluded, and the girls, who are always the most beautiful daughters of serfs and freemen, are embarked, after a month, perhaps, has been spent in bartering and chaffering between the merchants on one hand, and their parents on the other *

As the distance increased between us and the Russian camp my brothers looked with longing eyes towards our native hills, between whose misty peaks a flood of golden light was falling on the waving woods and on the rolling sea; and now they began to whisper and exchange glances of intelligence. Their minds were full of the pledge we had lately made to ourselves, that we would fly the hated yoke of Russia on the first opportunity; but this was no easy task, believe me, watched as we were by our own suspicious soldiers. At this time my whole soul was full of Basilia, and in the hope of freeing, of winning, and of loving her, even Circassia and her wrongs were forgotten for a time—God of the Prophet, but only for a time!

By a telescope I could see afar off the wild woods in which I had wandered when a boy, and the familiar mountain peaks up which I had clambered when fighting with the Muscovite riflemen, or hunting the boar and jerboa. I could see the bright gleam of steel and the flashing of chain armour between the shady oaks; for there armed bands were hovering, and there the Tartar bow, the Albanian gun, the Circassian lance, and the crooked sabre, awaited the Muscovite invader; and there the holy banner of the twelve stars waved above the tent of the glorious Schamyl. Watched as we were by the very men we led, flight, as I have said, was hopeless; but then I had no thought of

* It is calculated that one vessel out of six is taken. In the winter of 1843-4, twenty-eight ships left the coast of Asia Minor for Circassia, to purchase girls; twenty-three returned safely; three only were burned by the Russians, and two were swallowed by the waves.—WAGNER.

flight even when within a cannon-shot of armed Circassian bands which we could see with their camels laden with women, children, and household goods, clambering up the hills to avoid the Kalmuck scouts and Cossack foragers.

As the night darkened we saw lurid flames shooting up between the mountain clefts; and while our fierce hussars muttered in guttural Russ and laughed under their matted beards, the hearts of my brothers and myself grew sad, for we knew that the Tchernemorski lances were spreading woe and desolation in the homes of our people.

We searched every little bay, inlet, and river as we passed along the beautiful coast from Anapa to Soudjack Kaleh, a fortress which was then half in ruins, as General Williamoff had left it after storming its defences at the head of fifteen thousand men. It seemed now so lonely and so silent that no one could imagine the roar of war had once awoke its echoes, for the flowers of the arbutus, the rhododendron, and many other plants, most of them aromatic, filled the air with perfume as they grew in luxuriance on its battered walls, or twining round the old cannon's mouth as it lay half sunk among the stones and grass, or wreathling the bare skulls and white ribs of the dead on whose unburied bones, bleached by the sunshine and the storm, devouring dogs and mountain wolves had battered.

Evening had closed when we bivouacked near the beach, unbitted our horses, lighted our pipes, and sent round our cups of quass to wash down the black ration, bread and salt beef broiled among the embers till it was encrusted with ashes and brine; and we were just composing ourselves for the night, when my sergeant, a cunning and active Cossack, who had crept a mile or two along the shore alone, announced to me that he had seen some suspicious lights in a little creek of the bay of Koutloutzi. "Mount and march," was the order, and favoured by a brilliant moon, be-

neath whose light the Euxine rolled like a flood of silver at the base of the steep Circassian hills, we rode round the margin of this circular bay, and ascended the beautiful vale of Mezip, towards where my sergeant asserted he had seen the lights.

Halting our party he and I dismounted, and, taking only our swords and pistols, crept cautiously through a thicket towards where a river entered the bay, and such a place we knew would be the most probable rendezvous of the Turks with the slave merchant. The foliage was dense and dark overhead, for in this district the sturdy oak, the beech, and the chestnut grew to the water's edge, and the cherry-tree, the fig, and the wild olive were all in full bloom. It was a savage place. Toads croaked among the reeds, and rearing serpents hissed among the sedges of the river, which brawled over a ledge of rocks and fell into the bay, while the yellow-coated and weasel-like suroke whistled on the branches of the pine, and the fleet jerboa fled before us from its lair like an evil spirit.

Suddenly we saw a gleam of light, and heard the sound of voices. A few paces more brought us to the brow of a wooded bank, at the base of which we saw a number of Turkish sailors seated round a fire, smoking, drinking raki, and making merry, while one of their number, a little humpbacked fellow, with a hooked nose and enormous beard, sang to them, and twangled on a lute. They were sixteen in number (I counted them carefully), and all fierce-looking fellows, with enormous noses and mustachoes, large trowsers, dirty red tarbooshes, and red shawl-girdles stuck full of daggers and pistols. Most of them had cuts and scars or patches on their dusky faces, and all had a savage and sinister aspect, as the red gleams of the pinewood fire fell on them. The captain was particularly happy; as he believed, that if the Sultan Abdul-Medjid did but once see Basilia, the fortunes of all who had a share in bringing such loveliness

to gladden his sublime eyes would be made for ever.

In the back-ground, and drawn far up on the beach, lay their vessel, with its large angular sail stowed on deck; the yard struck, and the mast and rigging covered by green pine branches, the better to elude the observation of scouts, and to blend its outline with the surrounding trees, while heaps of branches, with dry leaves spread over all, were piled against the sides. But over the gunnel we saw several Circassian girls sitting very quietly, gazing at those rough and noisy guardians, who were to convey them to that brilliant Stamboul, which they had been taught to believe was an earthly paradise.

On that little deck, and apart from all the rest, sat one who did not seem to share the placidity of her companions, or to share their joyous anticipations. Her form was enveloped in her veil, and her head was bowed upon her hands, her eyes were sad, and fixed on vacancy. My breath came thick and fast. There was a swelling in my throat, as if my heart was there, for I knew that lonely weeper was Basilia.

As thirty or forty girls are usually deemed a good cargo and only ten were visible, it was evident to us that the Turks had no intention of putting to sea for some days; thus my sergeant, who had frequently been on expeditions of this kind, politely suggested—as we had ridden a long way—the expedience of sleeping quietly for that night, and slaughtering the Turks at our leisure in the morning; but my impatience would brook of no delay.

Again we mounted: I divided my party into two troops, and ascending the valley of Mezip for a mile or so, descended from different points towards the head of the Bay.

“Spur and sabre!” was the cry.

There was a brief but sharp discharge of pistols, a gleaming of knives and flashing of sabres, and in five minutes the surrounded Turks were all trampled

under hoof, shot and headless beside the fire which had lit the scene of their jollity, not one of them escaping save their deformed messmate, who dashed his lute at the head of Selim, sprung into the sea, and disappeared. The captain I sabred with my own hand; but not before he gave me this wound by a pistol shot, which grazed my left cheek like a hot iron

Inspired anew by love and triumph I sprang up the side of the vessel, and sought the lonely figure—it was as my heart divined—Basilia. I knelt before her, and took her hand in mine, trembling as I did so, for never until that moment had I touched even the hem of her garment. My soul was in my tongue, and weighed it down with words of love and joy, but one alone found utterance,—

“Basilia!”

She gave a cry of wonder, and as she gazed at me, her large black eyes dilated and flashed with anger.

“Basilia,” said I, “do you not remember me?”

“No,” replied she, while trembling; “who are you?”

“Osman, the son of Mostapha, your own Osman, who saved you at Anapa.”

“It is false,” she answered, with eyes full of anger and sorrow; “Osman was a brave Circassian warrior, and I loved him; oh! how dearly and how well; but he fell in battle at Mikhailov. Thou art either a base Muscovite, or some fiend in the shape of Osman; a ghoul it may be, a son of Ifrit; begone, and leave me.”

I could have wept at these stinging words, which sank like poisoned arrows in my heart, and I feared that grief had disordered her intellects; but I did injustice to Basilia, for her language was the first prompting of honest grief and indignation to find me in the uniform of the Tenginski Hussars, and false, as she deemed, to my country and to her. For so she told me, when more composed, and when she heard my

story, as we sat side by side under a broad chesnut-tree with the plunder of the Turkish ship around us, and the flames of its burning timbers to light our little bivouac. When we fired it, with all the branches and withered leaves that were piled over it, the flames burned bravely, and shot above the copse-wood, as they licked the mast and its well-tarred cordage.

I sat at the feet of Basilia, my heart teemed with joy, half the objects of existence seemed accomplished now, and I could no longer believe that fortune had greater favours in store for me.

In the language of our own beloved country, we formed innumerable projects of happiness, or whispered plans of escape from the toils of the Russians, and I had resolved in the night, if possible, to elude my own sentinels, to mount Basilia on Zupi, and to depart by the vale of Mezip towards the wilderness of mount Shapsucka, when my sergeant, with a dark and singular expression in his eye, came to inform me that my brother "the Lieutenant Selim was nowhere to be found."

Karolyi, who was sitting beside us, looked up, and gave a deep smile as the Cossack spoke.

In short, after seeing the last Turk cut down, Selim, while our dismounted hussars were overhauling the ship, had turned his horse's head towards the mountains and escaped.

I rejoiced at this for a time.

"But brother Osman," said Karolyi, "Selim has done us a wrong in this; we should all have fled together, for thou and I will now be watched with double suspicion, and have our simplest actions subjected to the severest scrutiny."

"Remember, there is the maiden, whom I cannot leave behind; so let us rejoice that Circassia has one brave warrior more."

Karolyi made a gesture of impatience.

"Circassia," said he, "has maidens enough and to

spare ; but for every warrior on her hills, she requires at least a hundred. This is no time for wedding or acting the lover, for twangling on the lute and kneeling on the verge of a pretty maid's carpet."

"These were my own words, Karolyi, when urged by you and Selim to wed ere Schamyl rose in arms."

"True, brother, true," replied Karolyi, "and in truth, this little maiden is a miracle of beauty. My soul and sword are at her service, command them ; but in the name of Merissa think not of escape to-night. Another and perhaps more favourable opportunity may soon occur."

The night passed quickly away. I watched Basilia while she slept in my mantle. I was sleepless, but silent and happy, for my mind was full of love and her.

Next day I placed her on Zupi, and we set out for head-quarters amid the maledictions of the ten rescued slaves, who saw all their anticipated delights of a seraglio life suddenly cut short, and who knew that fate would now consign them to high-cheeked Kal-mucks, or the rough, greasy Cossacks, in lieu of the wealthy Osmanlis, the luxurious Pashas, and turbaned Agas, whom they had hoped to have as masters ; and they consoled themselves by reviling me as a renegade, and invoking on my head all the ills that fell on the God-abandoned Thamudites, and on the offspring of Saba, the son of Yarab.

On arriving at head-quarters, I presented my prisoners, and the right ears of fifteen Turks to Colonel Carlovitch. The ears he flung to his dogs, and the ten girls, not finding favour in the sight of the officers who crowded about them, were given to Cossacks, to make wives or whatever they pleased of them, for such is the law of the Russian military colonies on the Kuban ; and to himself, despite my prior claim by love and capture ; despite my rage and grief, my entreaties and ill-smothered threatenings—to himself—

this accursed Muscovite assigned Basilia as a hand-maiden !

* * * * *

(Here the Circassian, who had related this part of his narrative in short and broken sentences, paused, and ground his teeth, while the veins of his fine pale forehead swelled like rigid cords, and his keen dark eyes became glazed with the ferocity, fire, and grief that filled them.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

ZUPI.

IVAN CARLOVITCH, he resumed, was a soldier insensible alike to pity and to danger. His cold and rigid sternness had first brought him under the notice of his imperial master, who raised him from the humblest rank in the army. He had a strict and almost absurd idea of the implicit obedience which should be rendered by the soldier to his superior; and wild as I was then with passion and grief on finding that I had only saved Basilia from one degrading condition to deliver her over to one still more cruel and terrible—to be the mistress, the plaything of a wretched Russian—I had sufficient tact to see that resistance would only serve to destroy my own hopes of a dreadful vengeance, and of achieving her freedom. On the first symptom of disobedience, Carlovitch would have brought me before a general court-martial. From this tribunal in Russia, the way to the knout or the grave is short and rapid, especially to a poor Pole, or a captive Tcherkesse warrior.

It is related that early in life, Ivan Carlovitch, the son of Carl, a porter of Moscow, was a soldier in General Ouchterlony's battalion of the Imperial Guard, and was one day a sentinel on the private

gate of the palace at St. Petersburg, when a sudden inundation of the Neva spread terror among the inmates of the edifice, and forced them to retreat to the upper stories.

The Empress Alexandrina was surveying the rising waters from a balcony, when she perceived Carlovitch standing at his post motionless, and mid leg in the water. In great alarm she desired him to retire within doors. He "presented arms" when Her Majesty addressed him, but respectfully declined. The flood increased. Trees were swept away, railings and balustrades, vases of flowers, dead cattle, boats, and logs of wood were surged and dashed against the palace walls; again and again the Empress and her ladies called in great agitation to the sentinel, desiring him to abandon a post so perilous; but with admirable coolness he replied, that he "dared not until properly relieved or withdrawn by an order from the captain of the guard." That officer had by this time clambered to the roof of the guard-house, from whence he sent the corporal, a good swimmer, to bring off this obstinate sentinel, who was now up to his neck in water.

For this act of bravado or insensibility to danger, Carlovitch was appointed a captain in the Infantry Regiment of Tenginski, and marched with it against the Circassians. In due time he was appointed colonel of the Tenginski Hussars (for there are two corps, one of horse and the other of foot, so named), and as such I found him when misfortune cast me in his way.

He was a man without mercy, and often brought his bravest soldiers to the knout for the most trivial fault; but he never broke into gusts of passion, and though constantly using among the soldiers, the serfs, and prisoners a heavy rattan, every blow of which brought away a stripe of flesh, he always addressed them with a cold and cruel smile, which filled those who knew him with fear and repugnance.

Oh, how I loathe his memory and the recollection of that fiendish leer, which I can picture so distinctly at this moment!

But what of Basilia, you would ask me?

Fain would I draw a veil over her fate; but a few words will relate it.

The insulting advances, the bold declarations of a love the most repugnant to a heart so pure, the caresses and the presents of Carlovitch she received with disdain. For three days and three nights tears were her only protection; entreaties for mercy her only weapon; but at last even they failed her. One night Carlovitch, flushed with wine and fury on leaving a banquet given by Prince Menschikoff, assailed her in his own tent, and to escape him, the miserable Basilia pierced her throat with a poniard, and died at his feet!

Her pure, fair, beautiful form was wrapped in a horse-rug, and buried by the rough hands of Cossack pioneers, at the foot of a rock on the left bank of the Kuban.

The grave of my love lay but a pistol shot distant from the tent of her destroyer; yet his iron heart never smote him, and never reproached him with his cruelty; he smoked, he drank the wine of the Tcherkesses, and played at cards and chess, and with his brother officers sang as merrily as ever, and no more regarded the death he had caused and the misery he had wrought, than the ashes of his last cigar.

Where then was I?

Forced to lead my troop against my own people, and watched by a chosen few of my own soldiers, I had been sent towards Azov in pursuit of fugitive Circassians. One whom we had tracked the livelong day, riding over steep mountains, through pathless forests and deep rivers, was taken at nightfall by his horse falling under him. He was brought in, exhausted with fatigue and faint with hunger, covered with blood, with scars, brambles, and heavily fettered. The poor

fugitive we had pursued so long, and taken at last, proved to be my brother Selim, who had failed to reach the camp of our confederated princes, and had wandered long on the Russian side of Mount Shapsucka.

I was filled with new dismay. It seemed that I required but this to complete my misery. I rent my beard, and threw myself on the ground; I cursed myself and Ivan Carlovitch in the same breath, and daringly upbraided the Prophet with injustice to a Mussulman so devout as I.

Poor Selim heard my words with terror. He raised me from the ground; he kissed me on both cheeks, and besought me to be composed, and then we were separated. I had to continue my march towards the shores of the sea of Azov, while Selim, the miserable Selim, was dragged before Carlovitch, who tried him as a deserter, had him degraded, and his sword and commission trodden under foot; after which he was sentenced to die—to die under the knout—"a terror to other Tcherkesses who trifled with the service of their beneficent lord and father the emperor."

Three weeks afterwards I heard of his fate, and to nerve my soul for the coming vengeance, I drank in the terrible description of the poor boy's dying scene.

I was told by my sergeant how the troops were formed in a hollow square—ten thousand Russian slaves, misnamed as soldiers, with bayonets fixed and colours flying; I was told how the noble prisoner stood amid them, with the kingly air of a true Circassian cavalier, though stripped of every article of attire, save a pair of tattered drawers; how he was bound by the wrists, the neck, and ancles, to a large gun-carriage, and how the executioner, a gigantic Kalmuck, stood six feet distant to give his infernal weapon a swing more full and heavy. I was told how Selim—for he was the youngest of us—screamed in agony as each successive blow fell on his bare and quivering shoulders, from which the flesh was torn in

pieces by every lash of the dreadful whip; how between every stroke this giant Kalmuck dipped its bloody ends in brimstone, and how the victim sank beneath the strokes, until at last their sound came dull and dead, for poor Selim had expired with four words on his lips; they were, "My brothers—my brothers."

I did not shed a tear for him; a fiend seemed to possess me; a devilish joy swelled within me, as I lay that night in the bivouac beside the feet of Zupi, rolled in my mantle, with my sword and pistols at my side.

"Woe to thee, whining cur of the Czar, woe!" I repeated again and again; "to-morrow I will see thee, Carlovitch—to-morrow shall thy soul answer to heaven and to hell for these atrocities; and to-morrow Mostapha's son shall cease to be the serf of this dog Emperor, Nicholas Paulovitch!"

The sunny morrow came, and loud and shrill rang the trumpets which summoned the Hussars and Grenadiers of Tenginski to a general parade. I examined my saddle girths, my bridle, and my arms, with scrupulous exactness, for this would be the last parade I was ever to attend. I threw away everything that might serve to encumber my motions or overload my horse, and by my advice Karolyi did the same.

We were now with that portion of the Russian army which had fallen back from the Circassian Mountains to recruit and reform after their defeats by Schamyl; and which, after recrossing the Don, was cantoned principally in the Ukraine. The division to which we belonged occupied Poltava, one of the richest and best parts of the adjoining province for pasturing cavalry horses.

On the very day after we halted at Poltava, a grand parade was formed before Prince Menschikoff, and as I had marched with the baggage guard, I saw Carlovitch for the first time since these atrocities had cast

a horror on my soul. The Prophet alone knows what were my emotions at the sight of him. The voices of Basilia and of Selim were rising from their graves—they were ever in my ears whispering “vengeance,” and I rode amid the troops like one in a stupor. The parade was a magnificent one.

There were present the Imperial Guard, under General Ouchterlony, a Scotsman, and his three sons, all colonels of battalions; these men were the flower of the Russian army; the six Grenadier battalions of Prince Frederick of Hesse Phillipesthal; the veteran regiment of Moscow, commanded by Prince Frederick of Mecklenburg; the Cuirassiers of the Grand Duchess Olga, and the gorgeous Hussars of the Princess Maria Paulowna (sister of the Emperor), whose trappings far eclipsed those of the two Tenginski corps of Hussars and Infantry. But Karolyi and I laughed at the splendour of these idolaters, and scorn grew with hatred in our hearts; for it is of these, and such as these—eaters of hogs’-flesh and drinkers of brandy—that our Prophet spoke, when he said, “lo! they are like no other than brute cattle.” and they shall perish like the people of Irem, of Thamud, and those who, as the Koran tells us, dwelt in al Rass.

The review passed before me like a dream, for my mind was full of other thoughts, and I saw only the mangled and bleeding body of Selim bound to the field-piece, and the poor remains of Basilia asleep in that uncouth grave where the Russian pioneers had buried her, when suddenly my name resounded along the glittering ranks; Carlovitch summoned me to the front, when all the cavalry were formed in line to deliver a general salute.

Something had gone wrong. I know not what, but I had neglected my troop when deploying from close column into line, and Carlovitch, usually so grave and impassible, was choking with passion. He called me “a dog of a Tcherkesse,” and smote me on the face with his rattan.

The blow went straight to my heart!

For a moment I felt as if a thunderbolt had struck me; but transported with fury, I uttered the yell-like war cry of Circassia, and buried my sharp sabre—the noble steel of far-away Damascus—in his dastard heart!

Again I thrust it to the hilt, as tottering he drooped upon his holsters, dying and gushing of blood, and then I spurned the corpse with my feet as it fell. I slew him on the spot, in the face of fifty thousand men! May the curse of mankind fall upon the turf which wraps the dog who begot him!

I brandished my sabre, and shouted wildly to Karolyi,—

“To the hills—away, away! Tcherkesse! Tcherkesse!”

Goring his horse with the spurs, he sprang from the ranks, as the roar of a thousand voices ascended from them, on witnessing this act of justice; together we dashed at a furious pace towards the nearest mountains, and had already placed a deep and rapid torrent between us and the Russians, before they had recovered from their astonishment, or made proper arrangements for a pursuit.

The most accomplished rider in Europe is acknowledged to sit his horse like a clown when contrasted with a Circassian cavalier; and fortunate it was for Karolyi and me, that we—both men and horses—were bred and reared on the slopes of the Caucasus; as we were hotly and fiercely pursued by relays of mounted men despatched fresh and lightly accoutred from the innumerable military posts we passed. The wild Tchernemorski Cossacks, with their long lances, and wiry little horses; the Tenginski and Paulowna Hussars, and even the heavy, helmeted, breast-plated and jack-booted Olga cuirassiers spurred after us; but among the deep rocky gorges, the tangled brakes, the shifting mosses, and the fordless rivers, we soon rid ourselves of the latter, and most of the others, save the Cossacks, who followed us like spirits of evil, un-

relenting and unwearying, for many a day and many a night.

In desperate hope to reach the Prussian frontier, we had already crossed the Dnieper, and traversed the palatinate of Minsk, where for days we rode over a flat country, of which we were ignorant, and where, in despair, we were frequently about to abandon the hope of escape, when we found ourselves involved in the mazes of a wild forest and dreary morass that lie on the banks of its rivers. But our native hardihood preserved us; for a cleft in a rock, or the branch of a tree with a sword for a pillow, is home enough at any time for a Tcherkesse warrior.

However, we now began to experience a serious difficulty in procuring a knowledge of the route to be pursued. We knew little of the language; our aspect was jaded, wan, and terrible; our uniform hung about us in rags; our horses were sinking, and that we were deserters was evident to every observer. And now the people of Lithuania joined in the pursuit, and one evening, just as we were about to cross a river named the Swislocz, our Tchernemorski Cossacks came upon us, and their wild shout of joy at the termination of that flight, which to them had been a long and exciting chase, rang in the air above us, as they reined up their horses on the rocks that overhung the stream, and brandished their spears.

We were about to plunge in, when one more bold or more freshly mounted than his comrades, wounded Karolyi by a lance thrust.

"May demons defile thy beard, and their plagues fall on thee and thine!" exclaimed my brother in a gust of fury; but now he had dropped or broken every weapon save his dagger, so with that quickness which is peculiar to the Circassian, he dismounted, rushed upon the Cossack's horse, drove the weapon into its breast, and bearing it back at the same time by the bridle, he hurled the snorting steed over upon its rider, and crushed him to death in an instant.

Vaulting again into his own well-worn saddle, he plunged with me into the stream, and gallantly we breasted it—while the carbines of the Tchernemorski Cossacks—the only soldiers in the Russian service who can at all compete with our people—rang on every side, as they commenced a simultaneous discharge upon us, and their bullets flattened on the rocks, or raised incessant water-spouts around us.

Suddenly I heard a low cry and a choking gurgle that filled my heart with misery. I looked back; Karolyi, struck by a bullet, had sunk from his saddle, and a spurred boot alone was visible, as horse and rider was swept over a cataract, and borne away towards the Dnieper.

So perished my second brother !

Forcing Zupi up a bank where the reeds grew at least twelve feet high, I still rode recklessly on ; but brave as they were, not one of the Cossacks dared to cross that foaming torrent in pursuit. Night came down to shroud my flight ; there was no moon. I reached a wood, and flung myself down exhausted in mind and body. I was now dead to the fear of discovery, and I cared not for wolves, or other wild animals.

The presence of Karolyi, his companionship and our brotherly love, had alone sustained me thus far ; now he was gone, and I was alone in the world ; but there was at least one consolation : he had died the death of a warrior, with one hand on his bridle, and the other on his weapon ; he had fallen, like his father's son, in battle with the enemies of his country, but he had found a tomb far from his father's grave, and far from the banks of the Kisselbash River.

Three days I lay without food, save a little wild honey, and without repose in that Lithuanian forest, and careless whether I lived or died ; for want, misery, privation and mental agony had broken my spirit, and destroyed alike every purpose, hope, and reflection. There I prayed to the only Prophet of God, and re-

membered with growing trust that in the blessed Koran, he enjoins us to seek aid with perseverance; and I implored him to deliver me, even as the Lord divided the sea of Kolzom with his hand to let his people pass, and thereafter drowned the Egyptian host; and the Prophet heard me; for even while I prayed with my bare head in the dust, there chanced to pass that way a poor Tartar who dwelt on the skirts of the forest, and who had come hither to cut wood.

He heard me address the Prophet, and remembering the faith of his fathers, felt his heart moved within him; so he had compassion upon me, and took me to his hut, which, like all the Tartar dwellings, was little better than a rabbit-hole, burrowed on the face of a hill, with a rude verandah in front. Fortunately it lay in a wild and secluded place; so I dwelt for some days in safety with this good man, who guided me across the plains of Grodno, until I passed the Prussian frontier, when I knelt with my face to the east, and gave thanks to Heaven—thanks that I was safe from Russia, although eight hundred miles lay between me and the hills of my beloved Circassia.

Zupi, my horse, the noble animal which had borne me this incredible distance, was my first care, and to procure new garments in lieu of the tattered uniform of the Tenginski Hussars was the second; and intent only on reaching Britain, which was about to declare war against Russia, I travelled through part of Prussia by railway, a mode of locomotion, which I there saw for the first time, and which filled me with wonder and awe.

On reaching that kingdom, I thought my troubles were at an end; but there, alas! I found myself accused of a murder, stripped of the little sum I had about me, separated from Zupi, cast into prison, and in danger of being hanged; or what was worse, sent back to the Russian General Todleben, who commanded at Grodno. It happened thus.

I travelled towards Dantzic in a second-class carriage, in which the only other passenger was a pale and careworn young man, whose profusion of beard, braided coat, and small cap, with its square peak, gave him somewhat the aspect of a student. Taciturn and thoughtful, and being full of astonishment at the speed with which we swept over plain and valley, across rivers and under mountains—travelling as it were on the skirts of a whirlwind—I did not address my companion, who after smoking a large pipe for some time, covered his head with his cloak, and threw himself at full length along the seat, where he lay, long, as I thought, asleep. A jolt of the train threw him on the floor, and perceiving that he lay motionless and still, I hastened to lift him; but how great was my emotion, to find my hands covered with blood—for this silent fellow-passenger was a suicide, who had cut his throat from ear to ear, by a knife, which he grasped in his now rigid hand.

I endeavoured to lower the windows, but I knew not the way; so I dashed one to pieces, and cried aloud to the guards or drivers—I know not which you name them; but I was unheeded, and still this apparently infernal vehicle, in which I was enclosed with the bloody corpse, swept on, screaming, whistling, jarring, clanking, smoking, and whirling over wood and plain, over the roofs of towns, past the weathercocks of churches, and the tops of lofty trees, with a speed and din that would have carried terror and dismay to the hearts of a Circassian host, and would have swept Kurds and Kalmucks to the furthest confines of Asia.

At Dantzic the train arrived in due time, and the doors were opened by the conductors. I was found with “the murdered man;” my recent cries were attributed to him; the broken windows to his dying struggle, for my hands were cut and covered with blood! The Prussian gallows threatened me on one hand, and the Russian knout upon the other. I was

a poor unfriended foreigner, in a land of spies, suspicion, and police agents; and in my own defence had not one word to urge, for I was ignorant of the language. But fortunately next day, a letter was found on the person of the deceased, who proved to be a French artist, announcing his intention of destroying himself, and adding, that "when he had no longer a sou, it was thus a Frenchman should die—Vive la France! Vive le diable!"

This relieved me, and explained the whole affair; but the Prussian gens-d'armes kept my purse, as they said, to pay "all contingencies;" and had not the captain of a large French ship taken pity upon me, and brought me and my horse to London—the capital of Europe—I must have begged for bread in the streets of Dantzic, and had to sell my beloved Zupi to save the noble animal from starvation.

Finding myself in the great city of London, I was likely to be in greater distress than when in the vast forest of Lithuania; for in London the whole population live in an atmosphere of snares, suspicion, and mistrust, every man viewing his neighbour as one who has a design upon him. Again I was starving, for the little sum with which the French captain supplied me was spent upon Zupi, by whose side I always slept at night in an old cart-shed. But remembering that by birth and habit I was a soldier, I applied to the officers of the Household Brigade; some of these smiled, and shook their heads doubtfully, until Sir Henry Slingsby laid before them my commission in the Tenginski Hussars; it was fringed with silver, and signed by the Emperor Nicholas Paulovitch. Then they had a fellow feeling for me, and treated me with a kindness, the memory of which fills my soul with gratitude; for never, to the last hour of my life, shall I forget it, or omit to pray for the good and brave Ingleez.

CHAPTER XIX

WE REACH HEAD-QUARTERS.

SUCH was the story of the Circassian captain, and it occupied the greater part of the time during which the San Lucar packet steamed along the south-west coast of Andalusia, passing Cape Plata, and entering the Straits of Gibraltar, had rounded the promontory which is crowned by towers and ramparts of Tarifa, after which a run of seventeen miles brought us into the harbour of the great rock, where the babble of Spaniards, Moors, Italians, French, and Gitanas was ringing in our ears again, as we landed with our horses on the quay.

Taking our new friend with us—for we could not but have a lively interest in a brother patriot of the valiant Schamyl—the Washington of the Caucasus, the Wallace of Circassia, we repaired at once to headquarters, and related the success of our visit to Seville, reserving future relations until we went to mess in the evening.

We introduced Captain Osman Rioni to Morton, our colonel, who immediately spoke to him of service in the Turkish Contingent, urging it upon him the more vehemently, as there were then in the harbour six transports full of French and British troops en route to Sebastopol. But Osman thanked the good colonel, and shook his head, saying,—

“Mohammed was the first Prophet of God, and the holy Murid Schamyl is the second! Our destiny is written on our foreheads; may it be mine to die in the ranks of war! Every man hath his part in life allotted to him; may it be mine to fight for my country, and fight again I shall! Is not her blood red on the Russian bayonets? I will carry a lance under no flag but the green Sangiac Sheerif of Cir-

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cassia. Would to heaven I saw it now with the twelve stars of the confederated tribes, for then I should see the Abassian peaks and the wilds of Daghestan, the warriors in their mail of links, and the linden trees that shade those cottage doors from which our women bless us, and we ride to war against the Russ. Yes, yes ; I will return to Circassia on her shore alone to fight with Schamyl against the foes of God, and to see once more the snowy rocks of Elbrus, where the ark of Noah first rested before it lay on Ararat."

His story, his peculiar language and bearing, his horse Zupi, and his love for that gallant animal made him quite a seven days' wonder with "Ours," and he was the lion of the mess table. Every one who had any pretension to be a connoisseur in horse-flesh had visited, criticised, and caressed Zupi, which was a long-bodied, wiry, and, to our taste, somewhat short-legged nag, with small ears, a noble head, full chest and flanks, compact and close.

"A hundred times and more he has stood still as a stone wall, and allowed me to fire my long Albanian gun between his ears, using his head as a rest," said Osman ; "courage, brave Zupi—courage ! Ere long thou shalt snuff the air in woody Daghestan, and drink of the foaming Koissons."

We raised a handsome subscription for him in one night at our mess table, and procured him a passage in a French cavalry transport ; so he left us, with lips that quivered as he said "farewell," and a heart that yearned with gratitude. He said that one day we should hear of him when Schamyl and his host marched towards the shores of the Sea of Azov.

Whether Osman reached his own wild and war-like country we have yet to learn ; for since the day on which the "Napoleon III." steamed away past the New Mole fort, with her deck crowded by Zouaves, and our Circassian among them waving his red cap in adieu to us, we have heard no more of him ; for the tidings of the Caucasian strife that reach Europe

are meagre, doubtful, and vague, as those that came from the Holy Land of old.

Slingsby and I were complimented in garrison orders for the manner in which we had accomplished our little diplomatic trip to Seville, and were praised for the dangers we had encountered and escaped.

Our adventures, with those of Osman Rioni, infected the mess with a desire to "spin yarns," and the result was, that from being the most matter-of-fact fellows in the world, every one of "Ours" had a romantic story to tell.

"Now, gentlemen," said the colonel, one evening when I had brought my narrative down to the happy epoch of our embarkation on board the steamer at San Lucar de Barameda, "how much more pleasant and entertaining has all this been to us than the usual absurd chit-chat which reigns supreme at a mess table; the everlasting quiz about the curl of Ramble's mustachios; the banter about Bob's whiskers, or Slingsby's bay mare, and how Shafton craned at the hedge in the steeple-chase; the odds on the Derby; the last new singer; the latest ballet importation, with the shape of her ancles, and so forth; the last novel or polka, or belle, or piece of humbug; now is it not so?"

Hereupon all those whose constant topics the colonel had just enumerated, warmly assented that it was, and that the narrative had proved immensely interesting.

"Deuced instructive, too!" yawned the most stupid fellow at the table.

"Might spin three volumes out of it, Ramble. 'Men and Manners in Andalusia!'" said another.

"No banter now, gentlemen!" said the colonel; "pass the bottles, Shafton. Mr. Vice-President, another allowance of wine; I have a proposal to make. We have been—that is, the most of us—have been in all the quarters of the globe, and have seen life in all its phases and varieties. Therefore, I beg to move that each of us who has a story to tell should forthwith

tell it for the amusement of the mess, under the penalty of a dozen of wine."

"Bravo," said every one.

"I beg to second the motion," said Jack Slingsby.

"With an amendment," added Shafton, "that the colonel should tell the first story himself, the said amendment to be inserted in the minutes of the mess committee."

It was carried unanimously, amid much fun and laughter.

Our colonel, who is a fine, frank, and brave-hearted old fellow, had no idea that he was so suddenly to find himself in his own trap. He laughed and reflected a little, as he stroked the wiry, grey mustache which, in compliance with the late general order, he had just begun to cultivate after forty years of close shaving; and then he smoothed his thin white hair, for he was an old soldier, and (but for the favouritism of the Horse Guards) would have been a general twenty years ago, being one of the few survivors of that army which gave battle to France on the shores of Aboukir, where, as he was wont to say, "he had carried the colours of Geordie Moncrief's lambs—the old Perthshire Greybreeks." He had also been through the whole Peninsular war, and served in the Fifth Hussars, with Sir Colquhoun Grant's brigade under Wellington in Flanders.

"I have seen much in my time, gentlemen," said he, good humouredly, as he tossed off a glass of claret, "but have no adventures of my own to relate—at least none that are at all worth your attention. I can, however, tell you the story of another, whose scrapes were somewhat remarkable, and were in some respects—as far as Spanish robbers were concerned—like those of Ramble and Jack Slingsby. They were told me by a French officer, a gay fellow, but a regular candle-snuffer at twelve paces, whom I met at Paris when the allies were there; by this you will perceive that the affairs I refer to happened many a year ago."

The glasses were filled; the cracking of nuts ceased; the heavy crystal decanters were slid noiselessly over the long smooth mess-table, the well-polished surface of which reflected the red coats around it, and all was hushed as our grave and gentle old colonel began the following narrative, to which I beg leave to devote my next three chapters.

CHAPTER XX.

ST. FLORIDAN ; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT.

THE night was dark, and the lamps of the Rue du Temple had nearly all been extinguished by a high wind; there was no moon visible.

It was in the month after the capture of Paris, in 1815, that the adventures I am about to relate occurred.

The defeat at Waterloo, the rapid advance of the British troops, the capture of Cambray by Sir Charles Colville, of Peronne, by the Brigade of Guards under Major-General Maitland, and, last of all, the seizure and military occupation of the great and glorious city of Paris—the citadel of Napoleon—the heart of France, had exasperated the French, and excited their animosity against us. Every citizen greeted us with darkened brows and lowering eyes.

No officer of the allied army could pass through the streets of Paris in perfect safety without being armed, and few went abroad from their billets or cantonments after nightfall, unless in small parties of three or four, for mutual protection. On many occasions we were openly insulted and severely maltreated in the more solitary streets or meaner suburbs of the city; while in the taverns and restaurateurs our quarrels were frequent with the old men of the Revolution, who had witnessed the decapitation of Louis, and the demolition of the Bastille; but still

more so with the soldiers of Buonaparte, who were swarming in every part of Paris, in plain clothes, or in the rags and remnants of their uniform.

Those French officers whom we met at the promenades, on the Boulevards, in the Jardin des Plantes, at the theatres, or in the salons and billiard rooms, sought quarrels with us quite as frequently as their men; but these, of course, ended in hostile rencontres, and for the first week or two a morning seldom passed without a French, or British, or Prussian officer being borne dead, or wounded, through a mocking crowd at the barriers, from the Bois de Boulogne.

In all these wanton quarrels and street assaults the republicans eminently distinguished themselves, and often vented their pitiful spleen by spitting at us from the windows; by hissing and railing at us in language that would have disgraced the denizens of the infamous faubourg St. Antoine; but after a time, when it became generally known that their great emperor had surrendered himself to Captain Maitland, of the Bellerophon, and submitted to the clemency of Britain, their virulence abated, and their manner became somewhat changed towards us; though their hatred of the Russian troops, sharpened by the bitter memories of the retreat from Moscow, was undying and inextinguishable.

It is an old story now; but Lord Wellington had taken every means to insure the tranquillity of the city, and to repress any armed outbreak, which must assuredly have ended in its utter destruction; for the Black Eagle of Hapsburg soared above Montmartre, and the Union of Britain waved over the splendid garden, the winding walks, and leafy groves of the Champs Elysées; the brass cannon of Blucher were planted at every barrier-gate, loaded with grape and canister, to rake the streets at a moment's notice; while by night and by day, his artillerists, in their blue great coats and bearskin caps, remained by their guns, with swords drawn and matches lighted. A

regiment of Scottish Highlanders occupied the Tuileries; the Prussian advanced guard was in position on the road to Orleans, cutting off the remnant of the French army who had survived the 18th of June, and still obeying the baton of Davoust, were lingering on the banks of the Loire. Every approach to Paris was guarded by our infantry, and a strong division of the Allies were encamped in the Wood of Boulogne, and along the right bank of the Seine, so far as St. Ouen.

Never was Paris, the glory of France, more completely humbled since Henry of England unfurled his banner on its walls!

My regiment, the Fifth Hussars, were in the third, or Sir Colquhoun Grant's cavalry brigade. We were quartered at Ligny, a small town on the Marne, about fifteen miles from Paris, where we occupied the ancient Benedictine monastery, which had been founded in the eighth century by St. Fursi, a Scot, as the old curé of the place informed me; and there, with an irreverence for which the public utility, the chances of war, and the orders of the quartermaster-general must plead our excuse, we stabled our horses in the church, and stored our rations and forage in the chapel of Our Lady of Compassion.

It was while matters at Paris were in the state I have described, that I obtained leave from parade one day, hooked on my pelisse and sabre, and rode from Ligny to visit the city of sunshine and gaiety, bustle and smoke, music and wine, intending to return to my billet, which was in the house of the curé near the bridge over the Marne.

I was in time to see the Russians reviewed by the Emperor Alexander, and passed the day very agreeably, visiting the Champ de Mars, the Tuileries, where the soldiers in the garb of old Gaul were keeping guard, as in the days of the Ancient Alliance; the site of the Bastille, the Hotel des Invalides, where many an old soldier of the Empire saluted me with more of sternness than respect in their aspect; the

temple where the hapless Louis had been confined, and the noble gallery of the Louvre, on the lofty walls of which were many a blank where the officers of the Allied army had torn down and conveyed away the artistic spoils of their several nations—spoils wrested from every city in Europe by the invading armies of Napoleon.

I dined at a restaurateur's on a beefsteak à l'Anglais and kickshaws, a bottle of tent dashed with brandy, and walked forth to enjoy a cigar on the Boulevards, where several of our bands from the Champs Elysées, and those of the Austrians from Montmartre, were playing divinely for the amusement of the thousands crowding those magnificent promenades, which, as all the world knows, or ought to know, encircle the good city of Paris, and were shaded by many a stately plane and lime tree, that was levelled to form the barricades of the last revolution.

There were the officers of the Allies in all uniforms, the scarlet of Britain, the white of Austria, the blue of Prussia, and the green of Russia, with all the varieties of their different branches of service, horse, foot, artillery, and rifles; Calmucks, Tartars, Scots, Highlanders, and English guardsmen, jostling and mingling among moustachioed students of l'Ecole de Médecine, French priests in their long plain surtouts and white collars, and Parisian dandies in their puckered trousers, short frock coats, and little hats; while the ladies, seated on camp stools, formed each the centre of a circle, in which revolved a little world of wit **and** chat and laughter; and the vendors of cigars, of bon-bons, hot coffee, and iced lemonade, pushed their way and a brisk trade through the crowd together.

I had tired of all this, and was thinking of my fifteen miles ride back to Ligny, through a rural district to which I was a stranger, though I had my sabre and pistols, and luckily the latter had been loaded by my groom. Nine o'clock was tolling from the steeples of Paris; the crowds on the Boulevards

were dispersing; the bands had all played the old Bourbon anthem, 'Vive Henri Quatre!' and with the troops had repaired to their several cantonments. The trumpets of the Austrians had pealed their last night call from Montmartre, and the English drums from the Champs Elysées, and the shrill Scottish pipes from the Tuileries had replied to them. The lighted portfires of the Prussian artillery were beginning to gleam at the barriers. The streets were becoming deserted and still.

Turning down the Rue du Temple, as I have stated, from the Boulevard St. Martin, I endeavoured to make my way to the stables of the hotel where I had left my horse.

The darkness had increased very much, and the oil lamps in the thoroughfares were few and far between, and creaked mournfully in concert with many a sign-board as they swung to and fro to the full extent of the cords by which they were suspended in the centre of the way.

Aware that the streets of Paris were then far from safe after nightfall, and that the knife of the assassin was used as adroitly within sound of the bells of Notre Dame as on the banks of the Ebro—with my furred pelisse buttoned up, and my sabre under my arm, I hurried on, anxious to avoid all rencontres with chevaliers d'industrie and other vagrants, who from time to time, by the occasional light of the swinging lanterns, I could perceive lurking in the shadows of porches and projections of the ancient street.

I soon became aware that two of these personages were dogging or accompanying me, on the opposite side of the way; increasing their pace if I quickened mine, and lingering when I halted or stepped short. Anxious to avoid brawls, for on that point the orders of the Duke of Wellington were alike stringent and severe, I continued to walk briskly forward, keeping a sharp eye to my two acquaintances, whose dusky figures seemed like shadows gliding along the opposite

wall, for the cold and high night-wind had extinguished so many of the oil lanterns, that some of the streets branching off from the Boulevard du Temple and the Rue St. Martin, were involved in absolute darkness and gloom.

I was somewhat perplexed after wandering for a considerable distance, to find myself on the margin of the Seine, which jarred against its quays, flowing on like a dark and waveless current, in which the twinkling lights of the Quai de Bourbon, and the gigantic shadows of the double towers of the church of Notre Dame were reflected.

My followers had disappeared ; but my uneasiness was no way diminished, being well aware that the clank of my spurs might mark my whereabouts ; and I was conscious that the gorgeously-laced hussar pelisse and jacket of the Fifth were more than enough to excite cupidity. I shrunk back from the Seine, on thinking of the ghastly Morgue (with its rows of naked corpses spread like fish on leaden trays), and the five francs given by the police of Paris for every body found in the river at day-break.

A low whistle made me start.

I turned round, and at that moment received a blow from a bludgeon, which would infallibly have fractured my left temple, had not my thick fur cap, with its long scarlet kalpeck, saved me. I reeled, and immediately found myself seized by four ruffians, who flung themselves upon me, and endeavoured to pinion my arms, and wrench from me my sabre, while they dragged me towards the edge of the Quai de la Grève.

Strong, young, active, and exasperated, I struggled with them desperately, and succeeded in obtaining the hilt of my sabre, which I immediately unsheathed, for the fellow who had been endeavouring to drag it from my belt, grasped it by the sheath only ; and an instant sufficed to level him on the pavement, with his jaw cloven through, and there he lay, yelling with

rage and pain, and blaspheming in the style of the Faubourg St. Antoine. Upon this his companions fled.

Solitary as the quay had appeared, the cries of the wounded bravo brought around me a swarm of vagrants from house stairs, from nooks in the parapets of the Pont Notre Dame, and from all the various holes and corners, where they had been nestling for the night, or hiding from the patrols of the *gens-d'armes* ; and recognising me at once as an officer of that detested Allied army, which had swept their vast host from the plains of Waterloo, and prostrated the eagle and tricolour, they assailed me with every epithet of opprobrium that hatred and malice could suggest ; and there was an almost universal shout of "A la lanterne ! à la lanterne !" in which, no doubt, my first assailants joined ; and immediately I saw a lamp descend, as the cord was unfastened from the wall of the street, and lowered for my especial behoof.

Alarmed and exasperated by the danger and insult with which I was menaced, I endeavoured to break through the press, by threateningly brandishing my sabre, but though the circle around me widened, still I was encompassed at every step, and made the mark at which a pitiless shower of mud, stones, and abuse poured without a moment's cessation.

While some cried "à la lanterne !" others shouted for the *gens-d'armes* and accused me of murder. I could perceive, to my no small concern, that the knave I had cut down lay motionless upon the pavement ; and most unpleasant ideas floated before me, that even if I escaped immolation at the hands of these enraged Parisians, I might have to encounter the greater humiliation and graver terrors of Monsieur le Duc de Guiché—the Cour Royale de Paris—the Chamber of Appeals—the Correctional Police, and heaven only knew what more.

At this perplexing crisis, a young French officer, in the scarlet uniform of the Garde du Corps of

Louis XVIII., broke through the crowd, exclaiming,—

“Halt! hold—in the name of the king—down with you, insolent citizens! Is it thus you treat our allies? *Nom d’un Pape!* but I will sabre the first that lays a finger upon him. Permit me—this way, *Monsieur Officier;*” and he put his arm through mine.

We were now in a low quarter of the city; the crowd of squalid wretches was increasing around us every moment; lights flashed at the opened windows of the neighbouring houses, and I could perceive the glittering bayonets, and the great cocked hats of a sergeant and six *gensd’armes* hurrying along the lighted quay, either to my rescue or capture, but which was dubious, for the vagabond women and rag-pickers continued to yell incessantly,—

“Arrest! arrest!—seize the English murderer! away with him to the *concierge!*”

My heart beat quick; but my new friend of the *Garde du Corps* seemed to be quite *‘au fait’* in the management of such affairs, by the admirable tact and decision he displayed. Calling lustily for the *gensd’armes*, he suddenly grasped half-a-dozen of the foremost men in succession, and rapidly—for he was a powerful fellow, threw them in a heap over the wounded man, thus increasing the tumult, the rage, and the confusion.

Then seizing me by the hand, he said hurriedly, “*Monsieur* will pardon me—but come this way, or you will be torn to pieces!” and half leading, half dragging me, he conveyed me down a dark and narrow street. “*Nom d’un Pape!* I could not see a brother of the *epaulette* maltreated by these rascally citizens,” he continued, laughing heartily at the rage and confusion of the *bourgeois*. “Ha! ha! follow me! I know how to escape. There are deuced few outlets, holes or corners, byeways or sallyports in Paris, that I don’t know. Ah *corbœuf!* didn’t they all tumble delightfully over like so many *ninepins?* Ha! ha! but hark! they follow us. Hasten with

me, Monsieur Officier, and remember that a brawl in this neighbourhood may prove infinitely more dangerous to you than to me."

I was too well aware of that to resist his guidance and advice; and having no ambition to suffer, like St. Stephen, at the hands of a mob, or (escaping that) to figure next morning before the correctional police, and in the evening endure a reprimand from Wellington, I fairly turned, and, accompanying my guide, ran at full speed along the dark alley, laughing heartily at the affair. Gathering like a snowball, as it rolled along, the multitude came on, puffing and shouting, and swearing and yelling behind us.

"This way," cried my guide, who laughed uproariously, and seemed one of the merriest fellows imaginable; "this way—Vive la joie! we are all right now!"

"Where are you leading me, in the name of all that is miraculous?" I exclaimed, as my companion, laying violent hands upon my sash, almost dragged me down a flight of steps, which apparently led into the bowels of the earth. The appearance of the vast depth to which they descended being increased by a few hazy oil lamps that twinkled at the bottom.

"Excuse me, Monsieur," said I; "what the mischief—'t is a strange den this! I will go no further!"

"Courage, mon brave! courage! why we have only descended about a hundred steps or so;" replied the Frenchman, still continuing to descend. "You will find this an old and odd place too; but if you would escape an enraged rabble, the claws of the police, the maison de force, the prison, and the devil, follow me, and trust to my honour. I am Antoine St. Florian, Captain of the Garde du Corps, and late of the 23rd Grenadiers under the Emperor. You are safe—I know every nook in this subterranean world, for I have found a shelter in its ample womb many a time before to night."

He still continued to speak as he descended, but

the sound of his voice became lost in the vast space of the hollow vaults; my curiosity was excited: I still kept my sabre drawn, prepared for any sudden surprise or act of treachery, and continued to descend some hundred steps, to a depth which I afterwards ascertained to be 360 feet.

"This way, Monsieur; on—on yet!" exclaimed my conductor, hurrying me forward through a gloomy vault, and at that moment I heard the uproar of the multitude, and the buzz of their mingled voices resounding afar off, and high above us at the mouth of the lofty staircase.

The aspect of the place in which I so suddenly found myself was so strange, so novel, so grotesquely horrible, that for some moments I was unable to speak, and gazed about me in astonishment. The whole place seemed hewn out of the solid rock, and the height of its roof was about twelve feet from the floor, which was uniformly paved. In every direction caverns were seen branching off lighted by lamps which vanished away in long lines of perspective till they seemed to twinkle and expire amid the noxious and foggy vapours of this wonderful place, which appeared like a vast subterranean city, or the work of enchantment. The atmosphere was cold as that of a winter day, and I was sensible of the utmost difficulty of respiration.

Myriads of human skulls, grim, bare, and fleshless, with grinning jaws and eyeless sockets, piles of human bones, gaunt arms and jointed thighs, basket-like ribs and ridgy vertebræ, were ranged in frightful mockery along the sides of the vaulted alleys or avenues of this subterranean city of Death. The ghastly taste of some grim artist had arrayed all these poor emblems of mortality in the form of columns with capitals and arcades of intertwined arches, but from every angle of which the bare jaws grinned, and the empty sockets looked drearily down upon us, producing an effect that, when viewed by the dim and uncertain light of the oil lamps, was

alike wondrous and terrible. I was now in the Catacombs of Paris, that place of which I had heard so much.

To me, who had but recently left the Peninsula, the appearance of these remnants of the men of other years was less striking than it would prove to visitors generally; for many a time and oft, I had bivouacked where the dead of France and Britain lay unburied; and I thought of Albuera and the plains of Salamanca, where we had encamped within twelve months after battles had been fought there—and pitched our tents and lighted our camp fires on ground strewn, for miles and miles, with the half-buried skeletons of the brave who had fallen there, producing an effect that was never to be effaced from the memory. There the triumphs of death were calculated to impress the mind with melancholy; but here it was too grotesquely grim and horrible.

Scraps of verses from Ovid, Virgil, and Anacreon, appeared over the entrances of these caverns or crypts, in gilt letters that glimmered through the gloom; while, with a strange incongruity, but in true keeping with the morbid taste of the French, large red and yellow bills, the advertisements of the theatres, the fashionable hotels, concerts, and tailors, &c., appeared on different parts of the walls.

At a little distance there bubbled up a sparkling fountain, the splash of which rang hollowly in the vast vaults, as it fell into a large basin, where a number of gold fish were swimming. Over it shone the legend, in gilded letters—

“THIS IS THE WATER OF OBLIVION.”

“They are strange and frightful places, these Catacombs, Monsieur St. Florian,” said I.

“True, mon ami,” he replied, pausing to take breath; “but famous for the growth of asthmatic coughs, and all diseases of the lungs. Peste! What an uproar these bourgeois make. The affair has quite sobered me, for I was somewhat unsteady

before. My face is scratched, I think. Does it seem so?"

"Rather."

"Mille baionettes! do you say so? and I shall be for guard to-morrow at the chateau—and with this swollen face. Morbleu! what will the ladies think?"

"I regret very much, Monsieur le Capitaine, that for me——"

"Pho! my dear fellow, no apologies; I care not a sous about it," said my new friend, whom I could now see to be a tall and handsome fellow, whose scarlet uniform, faced and lapelled with blue, fitted him to admiration. His face was prepossessing in its contour, and was very much "set off," or enhanced, by his sparkling dark eyes, his jet moustache, and smart red forage-cap; but he had quite the air of a 'roué,' and the unmistakable bearing of a man about town. "Ha! ha!" he continued, "how messieurs the bourgeois were rolled over each other; that was indeed a coup de grace—the trick of an old routier! Ah! 't was poor Jacques Chataigneur taught me that."

"How hollow our voices sound in these vaults," said I, after a pause; for the Frenchman's merry tones and light remarks seemed strange to me amid the deathlike stillness of a place so sad, so gloomy. "The echoes seem to come from an amazing distance."

"Oui: I will vouch for it, Monsieur never saw a place like this before. The Parisian dead of a dozen centuries are piled about us, and afford fine scope for philosophy and moralising. Diable! what an uproar there will be among all these separated heads, legs, and arms, when the last trumpet sounds; and many a hearty malediction will be bestowed on Monsieur Lenoir, of the Correctional Police, who, to please the morbid taste of the good bourgeoisie of Paris, made all this ghastly display. Corbœuff! the skulls are all piled up like cannon balls in the arsenal—there were

more than two millions of them at the last muster. But, hark !”

At that moment we heard a distant cry of “A la lanterne ! Death to the Englishman !” and a rush of footsteps down the long staircase followed.

“We had better secure our retreat,” said the French captain ; “all the avenues are closed, save that at the Val de Grace ; and if messieurs the gensd’armes possess themselves of it, we shall be captured like mice in a trap. The lieutenant-general ordered all the other outlets to be closed, because they afforded safe and sudden retreats for chevaliers d’industrie, and other worthies, who, after nightfall, become thick as locusts in the streets of this pious and good city of Paris. Nombril de Belzebub ! behold ! our friends have been reinforced.”

I looked back, and could see a party of about twenty gensd’armes advancing, but at a great distance, and their fixed bayonets flashed like stars in these misty caverns. The mob were in hundreds behind them, and the clatter of their feet and their cries rang with a thousand reverberations through the vast vacuity of these echoing catacombs. We could see them all distinctly ; for though a quarter of a mile distant, the lamps burned brightly where they were passing.

“I have my sabre, and will confront these rascals,” I exclaimed, becoming inflamed with sudden passion ; “they dare not lay hands on me, as a British officer.”

“Peste !” he replied, laughing ; “I think you have seen whether they will or not. ’T is better not to trust them ; a bayonet stab I do not mind, but think how unpleasant for a gentleman to be captured at the instance of a few rascally citizens. ’T will never do ! We are not far now from the Val de Grace. This way, up the steps, and I will lead you to a secret doorway, near a nice little house that I know of, and where a pretty face will welcome us with smiles.”

By the hand he conducted me up several flights of steps, along an excavated corridor, where the cold

wind blew freely in my face, and from thence by a doorway, the exact locality of which seemed well known to him, ushered me into a dark and quiet street, in a part of Paris quite unknown to me.

"My friend, we are safe; that is the Val de Grace," said my frank captain, pointing to a large mass of building; "there is the Rue Marionette, and that large street still full of open shops, light, and people, is the Rue du Faubourg St. Jacques, which leads straight across the river. We can mingle with the crowd, and there all traces of us will be lost."

"Any way you please," I replied; "never having been in this part of Paris before, I am quite bewildered. Lead on, if you please; it is a dark place, this."

"The Russians have probably been passing this way. It is well known in Paris that these piggish Muscovites never return to their camp from a ball or café without drinking up the contents of every lamp within their reach; nor can all the alertness of the gend'armerie prevent them."

On gaining the main street of the faubourg, the blaze of the lighted shops, the long lines of lamps, the gaiety and bustle which were seen on every side, together with the free healthy breath of the upper air, were a pleasant exchange for the dark and silent caverns we had quitted, where breathing was almost impossible, and the mind was oppressed by the gloom of surrounding objects.

"Vive la joie!" exclaimed Captain St. Florian, almost dancing as he took my arm; "how delightful is the free air of the streets after leaving that pestilent pit. Ouf! I shall never trust myself down there again. But now we must sup together at a restaurateur's. Come to the Oriflamme; 't is down the Rue de Bondy; Merci! there is a pretty waitersess there—a perfect Hebe. Her smart lace cap and braided apron—her red cheeks and roguish eyes will quite vanquish you."

"Well, then, the Oriflamme be it."

"You will behold teeth and eyes that some of our dames in the great world of fashion would give fifty thousand francs to possess."

Turning down the street, we entered a restaurateur's, on whose sign the Eagle of Napoleon had lately given place to the ancient ensign of the Bourbons.

A very pretty girl who sat within the bar with a handkerchief over her head, tied en marmotte, arose and welcomed us with a smile.

"Ah, entrez Antoine St. Florian," said she, raising her arched eyebrows with a true Parisian expression of pleasure and familiarity; "entrez, Monsieur."

St. Florian called her his 'belle Janette,' and saluted her cheek with all the freedom of an old friend, as she ushered us along a corridor, on each side of which were neat little chambers, or cabinets, each having a single table and two chairs.

That appropriated for us, had a lustre with two lights, and the walls were decorated with coloured prints of Jena, Marengo, Leipsic, and other hard-fought battles, on which St. Florian soon began to comment with all the ardour and enthusiasm of a French soldier; and by his sentiments soon revealed, that though poverty or policy had compelled him to assume the scarlet trappings of King Louis' guards, his heart was still with the fallen Emperor—the idol of a hundred thousand soldiers.

"And so your old regiment was the 23rd?" said I.

"Ah, the 23rd of the Emperor," he replied with a sigh, while his eyes lighted up at the name.

"I remember that we charged your regiment at the passage of the Nive, where I was on the very point of sabreing a young officer, before I fortunately perceived that the poor fellow's sword arm was tied up in a sling, and that he was quite defenceless."

"Indeed, how singular! and you saved him from your troopers, and conducted him out of the press
—"

"For which he gave me a draught of country wine from his canteen."

"The same. Ah, monsieur, my friend, I am that officer, and I owe you eternal thanks."

They shook hands with ardour.

"I had been severely wounded by the poniard of a villanous Spanish peasant, and was still suffering from its effects. Ah, it was quite a story, that affair; my evil eye brought it all about."

"Your evil eye?"

"Ah," he replied, laughing; "you would not think I had one, to look at me—I seem so innocent; but so I have, or, at least, had when I was in Spain; ha! ha! You have often heard the Spaniards speak of the Evil Eye—the Malocchio of the Italians? and how the women will veil themselves, cover up their children, and mutter a prayer if a stranger but glances at them."

"I have heard of that superstition, when on the borders of Estremadura; but your affair—"

"Listen, and fill your glass with the champagne—I call it 'The Evil Eye.'—'T is a perfect romance, and was well known to many a brave fellow of the 23rd, who has found his grave at the foot of Mont St. Jean."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WIDOW; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT.

"I WAS quartered with my company of grenadiers at El Puerto, a wretched village in Andalusia; a poor place it was, that had been rifled by our foragers a dozen times, and we very unwisely made it still more miserable, by burning the best cottages before we were ordered to quit it.

"I quartered myself on the best casa in the village, a red-tiled hut, that belonged to a strange-looking fellow, whose long visage and long legs, great black

eyes, yellow trunk breeches, green doublet, and sugar-loaf hat, made him seem half muleteer, half gitano. I believe, from his superstitious observances, that he was the latter wholly. You will know, doubtless, how famous Andalusia is for its women and horses. Ha! I wish you had seen the wife of my long-legged patron. She had the beautiful eyes and olive skin of her native province, with teeth like pearls, lips like cherries, and a face full of the sweetness of the mildest Madonna. Ha! ha! I am growing quite poetical! but wine or love always make me so. You will never see, even on our Boulevards, and that is a bold assertion, a pair of more superb ankles, than the short red petticoats of that Andalusian woman revealed to the pure gaze of your most obedient servant. Peste! I was quite enchanted with my pretty patrona, and determined on sending her husband, tied across a mule, as a spy to the British lines, that so I might be rid of him for a time, or for ever.

"They had a child, too, a merry little brat, with which I often played and toyed, to please its mother, whose heart was quite won by the bonbons I gave it; while her tall ghostly don of a husband stood sullenly aloof, smoking a paper cigar, and regarding me from beneath his broad sombrero, with eyes full of jealousy and malice. Now, as the devil would have it, the little brat had long been ailing, and seemed very likely to die at the time we came to El Puerto; and as she watched her sleeping infant, the mother's eyes were often suffused with tears. This, you may be aware, served but to make the charming Spaniard more interesting; for her melting black orbs seemed to be ever steeped in the most delicious languor.

"One evening I became very much aware of this; and after toying a little with the sickly infant, by tickling its neck with a braid of the mother's long black hair, while I lisped soft nothings from time to time, I departed to look for Jean Graule, my sergeant, to hold a consultation about the safe transmission of

the señor patron to the British lines, and with my compliments to the officer commanding the nearest out-picquet.

"The evening was rather gloomy; I missed my way, and strolled into one of those underground vaults, bodegas, as they are called, where the peasants keep their wine in Andalusia. There I amused myself probing the pigskins with my sword, and imbibing the cool balmy wine from the orifice, till, somehow, a heaviness stole over me, and I fell fast asleep.

"About midnight I awoke, and found myself alone in the dark bodega, drenched with the wine that had flowed from the wounded skins; and feeling very cold, with the agreeable accompaniments of an aching head and sore bones.

"By the moonlight which struggled through a grated window, I sought my way out of the vault, up the stair, and gained the street of the silent Puebla, where I stood still for some time to rally my scattered faculties, and recollect where I was. While this passed, a man, who had been concealed under the shadow of a vine trellis, rushed upon me, and furiously struck at my breast with a knife or dagger. My shoulder-belt saved me from the stroke; 't was lucky that I had it on, otherwise I should not have been enjoying monsieur's society, and this glorious wine, to-night.

" 'Ah, mouchard, vagabond!' I exclaimed, and closing in a desperate struggle with the would-be assassin, succeeded in striking him to the earth; where, holding my sword at his throat, I demanded his reasons for assailing me thus.

" 'To have slain you!' he growled.

" 'For what, you base rascal?'

" 'To have revenged the loss of my child,' replied the fellow, whom I now recognised to be no other than my worthy patron, the long-legged paisano.

" 'Ouf!' said I.

" 'Dog of a Frenchman! on the day you first came into my poor cottage the child was well and strong, for it was under the protection of the Blessed Virgin;

but you turned an evil eye upon it, and, lo! it sickened; day by day it grew worse, and to-night it died: not even romero at its neck, nor the agua bendita on its brow, could shield it from your evil influence. Son of Satan, I spit upon you!

“A pest upon your brat, you insolent madman,” said I, almost laughing, for the wine of the bodega had still its influence over me: ‘had you said that I cast evil eyes on your wife, there might have been some truth in the matter; but your child—ha, ha!’ and I laughed till the street of the Puebla rang again. ‘Halloo, Sergeant Graule—quarter guard—ho, there!’ and a dozen of my grenadiers rushed from a tavern to my assistance.

“To Jean Graule’s care I recommended the señor, and in five minutes, at the end of a tent cord, he swung from the chimney of a neighbouring house.

“‘Now, señor rascal,’ said I, making him a mock bow, on leaving him in the grasp of the soldiers, ‘I will go and console your pretty wife for the loss of her child, and more particularly that of her amiable spouse. Both are so easily replaced, that I would recommend you to die in peace, my jovial pagan.’

“‘My wife, my wife!’ said he, in a terrible voice, striking his breast and looking upwards. ‘El Santo de los Santos—Holy of Holies, forgive me.’

“‘Console yourself, my friend,’ said I, while Jean Graule and the soldiers laughed till their belts nearly burst. ‘Console yourself, señor paisano, for your little wife shall laugh and be merry to-night.’

“‘She waits you,’ said he, with a frightful smile. Diable! methinks I can see his white face, as he grinned, like a shark, in the moonlight; ‘She awaits you.’

“Graule dragged him off.

“I hurried to the cottage of the paisano; but, mon Dieu, what a sight awaited me!

“On her bed, a miserable mat, lay the beautiful Andalusian girl, stone dead; stabbed by a poniard thrice in the neck, and her little infant, also dead, lay in her arms, pressed to her crimson bosom. In the

first gust of my fury I rushed out to slay the jealous perpetrator of this horror; but he had, as I have already said, paid the debt of nature, and his dying form was wavering in the moonlight from the gable-end of a neighbouring house.

“Bah! there is always something in this reminiscence that makes me dismal—but let me think no more of it.”

And draining his glass of champagne, the gay St. Florian began to hum an old camp song, beating time with his fingers on the well-polished table. Though this episode of his life rather decreased my admiration for this gay fellow, still the jaunty manner in which he related it somewhat amused me.

With the pretty Janette he appeared to be an old-established friend; and a great deal of flirting, and that kind of conversation which consists of pretty trifles, ensued each time she appeared on the ringing of the bell. But the *ci-devant* grenadier of Napoleon was doubtless on the same easy footing with all the waitresses and shop-girls in every warehouse, cabaret, and café in and about Paris.

As the night was rather chilly, I proposed that we should have some mulled port, spiced with cloves and sugar, in a mode I had often had it prepared at Madrid by an old patrona on whom I was billeted.

St. Florian's countenance changed at the mention of the mulled wine, and with ill-concealed disgust and precipitation he protested against it, swearing by the head of the Pope, that although he never drank water when anything better could be had, he would rather drink it out of a ditch, after a brigade of horse had passed through it, than taste mulled wine of any kind.

“And why so?” I asked, astonished by his vehemence.

“*Sacre nom*—’t is another long story; but Chataigneux, of the 23rd, and I, were as nearly brought to the threshold of death as may be by some muddy liquor called mulled port, and I never could look

upon it, or think of it, with any degree of patience. You will find the story in all the French and Spanish newspapers. Ouf! it made a devil of a noise in the army."

"I should be glad to hear it," said I, touching the bell-rope; "but in the meantime——"

"We will have some more champagne. Yes, the champagne of the Oriflamme is delicious. I have drunk a tun here, I believe—aye, in this very room, with Jacques Chataigneur. There are some caricatures of Monsieur Vellainton which he chalked on the wall. Poor Jacques! a shot from that cursed Château of Hougomont passed through his heart, when, sword in hand, he was leading on the grenadiers of the great Emperor to conquest or to death. He fell within a yard of me, prone over his horse's crupper, and his last words were—'To the charge, to the charge! Vive l'Empereur!' If true courage and bravery are rewarded in heaven—but, *ma foi!* I am growing quite pathetic. Where is the wine? Janette," he cried, down the passage, "Janette, my princess!"

"Ah oui, monsieur—me voila!" replied the girl, running in.

"My dear girl, let us have some champagne, a few more cigars, and a nice little tray of grapes, or bonbons; but let the wine be bright as your own eyes, my wanton."

The girl was tripping away.

"But halt, Janette," he added, catching her by the skirt; "how long is it since a rough moustache has been pressed to that pretty cheek of yours?"

"Monsieur St. Florian, you are pleased to be very rude."

"Come, coquette, do not affect to mistake pure admiration for rudeness. Now you owe one salute, my pretty Janette, for remember how you fled from me last night on the Quai de la Conference."

"Well, then, one only," said she, tendering her cheek, which was slightly rouged.

St. Florian stole three.

"Ah treacherous!" exclaimed the girl, striking him playfully with her hand, and skipping away.

"Peste!" said the captain, twirling his moustache; "but your little fingers smart, my pretty one."

"Now for the other story, Monsieur St. Florian," said I, when the bright wine sparkled in the tall glasses, and our fair attendant had withdrawn. "I would fain learn why an old soldier dislikes any sort of wine. I have often drank ditch-water on the line of march, and have gladly filled my canteen from the ruts of the artillery wheels——"

"And so have I a thousand times, but my dislike to mulled port arises from something more than mere prejudice—bah! this is worth an ocean of a muddy drench, boiled in a kettle with sugar and cloves. See how it sparkles when the glass is raised to the light. *Ma foi!* 't is like a glass full of diamonds. We shall drink to the emperor."

"I have no objection."

"I hope the door is closed, though. Paris is such a city for espionage, police, and informers: *Ouf!* but '*Vive l'Empereur Napoleon!*'" and he drained his long glass, while his dark eyes flashed with enthusiasm.

"Long life to him!" said I, with a frankness that won the Frenchman's heart; "and now let me know the cause of this horror of mulled wine."

"Perhaps you have already heard it. I well remember that it made a deuced noise at the time it occurred, and, save the maid of Zaragossa, there never was a woman so extolled by the Spaniards as she of whom I am about to speak,—

"THE WIDOW OF MADRID;"

for so he named the following story.

"It was in the month of December, when the immortal emperor and the victorious army of France captured Madrid, that Jacques Chataigneux, four officers of the Imperial Guard, and myself, were quartered,

or rather, according to the unceremonious custom of war in the like cases, took the liberty of quartering ourselves, on a house in one of the most fashionable streets in the city.

“Every place within the walls was full of our troops; horse and foot were swarming in tens of thousands; the red rosette and the banner of Castile and Leon had disappeared; the French eagle soared in triumph over the capital of the Spaniards. Every house, from the great palace of the Duke d’Ossuna to the poorest casa on the margin of the Manzanares, was undergoing a strict investigation, to discover where Messieurs the Spaniards had hid their doubloons and other valuables, for which the pouches and haversacks of our soldiers were yawning.

“Our fellows were rather riotous, especially about the cafés and wine-houses, where every man drank his fill, without being at the expense of a single sou. The city was involved in chaos and uproar. *Merci!* ’t was such a hubbub as you in all your service can never have witnessed; for, what with disarming the men, and running after pretty women, searching for wine, provisions, and plunder, our soldiers had quite enough of business on their hands.

“The house which we honoured with our presence, on this auspicious occasion, was a handsome mansion, with broad balconies, and lofty saloons, having gilded ceilings, tiled floors, and rich furniture; and you may imagine how acceptable the splendid bed-chambers were to us, who had been under canvas for months.

“It belonged to Donna Elvira de Almeria, whose family had just been reduced to one daughter, by the unexpected deaths of her husband and three sons, who had fallen on the previous day sword in hand, as she told us, like true cavaliers, defending the palace of the Retiro, which had been breached by the cannon of the Marshal Duke of Belluno; but the ghastly gap had been defended with admirable resolution and bravery by the Spaniards; so the soldiers of the

emperor, petulant at all times, were somewhat exasperated in consequence.

“ We, ourselves, were ripe for mischief, and I cannot rehearse all the fine things we did in our ramble through the city that night: I beseech you to suppose them.

“ The household of the Donna Elvira were, as may be imagined, overwhelmed with terror and grief by the misfortune which war had brought upon them; and their condition was in no way soothed or ameliorated by our appearance among them, blackened with powder and smoke, and bespattered with blood and dust, for we had hewn our way in by the breach at the Retiro.

“ The ladies were both handsome, but more especially the daughter Virginia, a timid girl of about fifteen; and at these years a Spaniard is almost a woman. Her tears, I blush to say, made little impression on me, but her beauty had a great effect on us all. However, drunk as we were, we remembered Chataigneux was our senior officer, and that his pleasure must be known before the officer next in rank presumed to open the trenches; or, in other words, address the ladies in the language of gallantry.

“ Jacques was a child of the revolution, an iron-hearted soldier, penetrable only to steel and lead—half fox, half wolf; to anything soft or sentimental, he was immovable as a cannon-ball. It was said in the 23rd, that he had done some terrible things in La Vendée, and certainly his more recent campaigns in Holland and Italy had taught him to view with the coolness of a stoic the blood of the bravest men and the tears of the most beautiful women.

“ Peste! he was a true philosopher, and one might march from Dunkirk to Damascus without meeting such another. He was never troubled with any unpleasant qualms of conscience—not he, because, like most of those fierce soldiers, who had been trained and nurtured amid the horrors of the revolution, he

believed in neither God nor devil, heaven nor hell; and, consequently, cared not a straw for any of them."

"A pretty picture of your friend and comrade," said I, with a smile.

"Peste! yes. He should have appointed me to write his epitaph. Chataigneux was the man it was a pleasure to follow to the breach or battle-field; for he cared as little for riding headlong on the charged bayonets of a solid square, or manœuvring his regiment under a storm of grape-shot, as for handing his partner through the figures of a quadrille. But, to return. The ladies, on perceiving us enter their mansion uninvited, gave us a specimen of Spanish hauteur, by retiring to a distant apartment, and leaving us to provide for ourselves.

"This we were not long in doing. The servants had fled; but Chataigneux ordered three grenadiers of the 23rd, who were in attendance upon us, to break down the doors of the cellars and other repositories: thus, in the twinkling of an eye, we had the sherry, the Malaga, and the Ciudad Real of the old beldame in abundance.

"We installed ourselves in the finest saloon of the mansion, while messieurs our servants possessed themselves of the kitchen, where they stripped off their accoutrements and coats, piled half-a-dozen shutters, a door, and a chair or two on the hearth; and so zealous were they in preparing a repast for us, that the rascals nearly set the house on fire. All the pantries were laid under contribution, and large conscriptions were levied on the poultry-yard, and we were soon as merry as magnificent quarters, a plentiful supper, and wine ad libitum, without having a sou to pay for them all, could make us. We drank deadly bumpers in honour of the emperor, to the success of his armies, to ourselves, to the continuation of the war, to the girls we had left behind us in beautiful France, and the devil alone knows what more. Oh, the exquisite delights of living at free quarters in

an enemy's country! Vive la joie! I need not expatiate upon them to you, for I heard of your pretty doings after Badajoz fell."

"They could not compare with yours at Madrid."

"You shall hear. 'In the ardour of our attack upon the savoury viands,' said the Chevalier de Vivancourt, a gay sub-lieutenant of the guard, 'we are quite forgetting the ladies!'

"'Mon Dieu! yes—what negligence!' said one or two ironically.

"'I shall make amends for our ungallantry,' said Chataigneux, starting up and staggering unsteadily; for he had enough of Ciudad Real under his belt to have served even a German. 'Hola! Pierre, Jean Graule, where are the ladies, just now—eh? the sour-visaged madame and plump little mademoiselle?'

"'Shall I have the honour of conducting them to the presence of monsieur?' said our sergeant, giving his military salute. 'The mother——'

"'Oh the devil take the mother, or you may have her yourself, honest Jean.'

"The sergeant bowed, and grinned.

"'But sabre de bois! 't is the little daughter I want,' said Chataigneux.

"'They are at prayer in their little oratory, I believe,' urged the chevalier, who was the least wicked among us.

"'Praying!' reiterated Jacques with intense disgust; 'I shall soon change their cheer. Are there any guitars or mandolins here? The girl—what's her name? Virginia shall bear us company in a merry chorus, or shall ride the cheval de bois with a vengeance.'

"'Let us have her by all means,' said one of the Imperial guardsmen; 'we must teach this young creature the first rudiments of love and coquetry.'

"'Will some of you lend a hand to undo the clasp of this infernal sword-belt?' grumbled Jacques, who

was very tipsy. 'Avaunt, Jean Graule, thou art drunk, man! Vivancourt, most redoubtable chevalier of the immortal legion of honour, lend me thine aid. Corbœuf! I am swollen like a huge tortoise with Ciudal Real. Now, messieurs, remember that I am the senior officer here, and that whoever follows me does so at his peril.'

"And half-dancing, half staggering, he swagged out of the room accompanied by Jean Graule.

"We continued to enjoy ourselves with supreme nonchalance, for the Imperial Guard and the 23rd Grenadiers were the most reckless routiers in the army. Believe me, we were too much accustomed to storming to trouble ourselves much about the little Spanish girl; but I am forgetting that you are not a Frenchman; so, fearing to shock your cold British prejudices, I will, as the novelists say, draw a veil over what passed;" and M. de St Florian smiled complacently as he emptied and refilled his glass.

"Is it possible!" I exclaimed, with something of incredulity in my manner; "is it possible that brave soldiers, and gentlemen of France—France, once so famous for its spirit of honour and chivalry—could behave thus?"

"Monsieur, my word is never doubted," replied the other good-humouredly; "how could you expect us to behave like saints or apostles, or perhaps like the cool stoics that compose a regiment of kilts?"

"Chataigneux was absent with Jean Graule about an hour, during which time we scarcely missed him, so closely did we pay court to the glittering decanters and bloated pig-skins, which we laid under contribution without mercy. The wax lights were becoming double; the saloon was beginning to swim around us; and we were in the very midst of singing the carmag-nole in full chorus, at the utmost pitch of our lungs, each having his drawn sabre in his right hand, and a mantling cup in his left, when the door was dashed

open and Jacques Chataigneur entered, with Donna Elvira supported on one arm, and her daughter Donna Virginia on the other.

“With a triumphant and scornful air, he led or rather half dragged them in, and forced them to sit down at table with us.

“Although being so tipsy that I could scarcely know whether my head or heels were uppermost, I can still remember the terrible expression depicted in the faces of these two ladies. The mother’s wore the fury and rage of a tigress; the blood seemed to boil in the swollen veins of her temples, and her large black Spanish eyes shot fire from time to time as she surveyed us. Her daughter’s appeared the very reverse, and her face expressed only the darkness of despair.

“She was very beautiful; her long black hair was loosened from its braids, and hung matted in disorder about her shoulders, and half concealed her face, which was pale as death. Her eyes—you will remember the splendid eyes of the Spanish girls—her eyes were bloodshot and red with weeping; their expression was wild, wandering, insane; and there was a chilling air of desolation and abandonment in her grief that had, indeed, a very considerable effect on me (for I am not altogether such a bad fellow as monsieur may suppose me), although her utter despair had none on Chataigneur and my more intoxicated companions.

“Her lips were quivering, and her graceful Spanish dress, her long veil particularly, was torn to ribands.

“‘Messieurs,’ said Chataigneur, bowing with an air of mock politeness; ‘I am permitted to have the high honour of introducing you to the notice of Donna Elvira de Almeria, widow of a very brave Caballero y Procuradore of new Castile, and her daughter the enchanting Virginia, whom, as I have two ladies who equally claim the title of Madame la Colonel, I shall advance to the ancient Spanish dig-

nity of being my Barragano,* which will square all matters between us, so Vive la joie ! let us drink and be merry !’

“The eyes of the Spaniards absolutely glared as he spoke.”

“The scoundrel !” I exclaimed, becoming excited by this revolting narrative. “Would to heaven that I had been there with a few of my English hussars.”

“That would have availed little,” replied St. Florian, pouring out his wine with slow sang froid ; “every street and house within the trenches was swarming with our soldiers ; and such scenes as that I have described were innumerable.”

“Excuse me, Monsieur le Capitaine ; but I must pronounce your comrade to have been a finished rascal.”

“Peste !” muttered the Frenchman, half angrily ; and then he continued, while laughing and twirling his moustache, “Opinion is the queen of the world —’t is a proverb we have, and a true one. But poor Chataigneux is gone now, and I must not hear him abused.

“But, to continue. The excitement of the preceding day’s fighting, and the quantity of wine we had drunk, rendered us insensible to the distresses of these poor women ; and with shame and sorrow I now remember that we permitted Chataigneux, by dint of many a savage threat, to compel them to assume their guitars and sing in accompaniment, while we chaunted a bacchanalian ditty suited only for the meridian of the lowest cabaret in the faubourg St. Antoine.

“What they sang Heaven only knows, for, nom d’un Pape ! my comrade, the horrible catastrophe to this little supper has fairly driven all minor incidents from my memory. And there they sat and sang to us—sang with shame on their brows, and rage, and

* See “*Essayo Historico Critico on the Ancient Legislation, &c., &c., of Castile and Leon*,” 4to., Madrid, 1808, for this term.

grief, and agony in their hearts—while a husband and three sons, a father and three brothers, were lying dead in their harness by the walls of the Retiro.

“We drank bumpers to Virginia, and made the ceiling shake with our mad laughter and revelry. In the midst of this, unluckily, the Chevalier de Vivancourt called for a bumper of mulled port. What fiend prompted a request so useless I cannot imagine; but we all joined in his demand vociferously; and the old dame, who appeared to have somewhat recovered her equanimity, desired her daughter to prepare it. She spoke in Basque Spanish, which we did not understand, but which should have been sufficient to kindle our suspicions; and I could perceive that a wild and almost insane expression flashed in the eyes of the little Donna Virginia as she flung aside her guitar and rose to execute the order.

“With some trouble she extricated herself from Chataigneux, whose arm was round her waist. He was very angry, and growled like a bear at the chevalier, swearing by the sabre de bois that he would put him under arrest for the trouble he occasioned.

“While he was yet speaking, Virginia returned with the prepared wine in a crystal vase, from which, with her own fair hands, she filled our long, carved glasses. We drank to her, draining them to the dregs; and, with a grim smile on her pallid lips, our youthful cupbearer replenished our glasses. The flavour of the wine was so exquisite, that Chataigneux embraced Virginia with drunken ardour, and desired her to bring us more.

“‘You will require no more!’ she cried, with a shriek, as she flung the vase from her hands, and it was dashed into a hundred pieces.

“We rose in alarm, but instantly sank again on our seats; and at that moment a peculiar and horrible sensation came over me. *Sacre!* methinks I feel it yet. I looked upon my companions of the carousal, but read in their faces an expression that yielded me anything but comfort. Three had dropped their

glasses, and reclined upon their chairs, with open mouths and fixed eyes, which gleamed with the vacant wildness of insanity. The Chevalier de Vivancourt sank prostrate on the floor, while Chataigneux, who seemed also about to sink, turned and stared with a powerless aspect of rage and alarm at Donna Elvira.

"Virginia had sunk upon her knees and hid her face in the skirt of her torn dress; but her mother stood erect, and, with her arms outstretched towards us, shrieked in a frightful voice between a moan and a yell, while a murderous rage, alike fiendish and terrible, caused her tall form to tremble, her proud nostrils to dilate, and her large dark eyes to gleam like those of a rattlesnake.

"At last we have avenged ourselves! Perros y ladrones! Frenchmen, dogs, and murderers, let me scream into your dying ears, that we are Castilian women, and have avenged our wrongs! I have lost my brave husband and his noble sons—by numbers you destroyed them, and side by side they fell on the palace threshold of the kings of Castile. Oh, blood-hounds—worse than devils in the form of men, ye murdered them, and now—my daughter (her voice became choked), my innocent little daughter—but we are revenged — revenged — revenged! Oh, Santa Maria, Virgin, y Madre de Jesu! let us be forgiven—but, fiends, the sure, cold hands of death are upon you—you are dying, for the wine you have drunk is poisoned!"

"Mon Dieu!" said St. Florian, pausing while the perspiration almost suffused his forehead, "still the screech-owl voice of that detestable hag seems to ring in my tingling ears!"

"Inspired by terror and rage, I made an effort to spring up, to draw my sabre, to run her through the heart; but the moment my hand touched the hilt, a deadly numbness crept over me; I staggered backward, and while sleep and despair came over my soul, sank prone and insensible on the corpses of my comrades!"

St. Florian paused again for an instant, for he really seemed considerably excited by the recollection of the adventure.

“Parbleu! ’twas a most unpleasant denouement—a devil of a winding-up. Next morning I found myself lying prostrate on the chilly floor of the Church of the Conception, which, with many others, had been converted into a temporary hospital for the sick and wounded. I was sick for seventeen days, and my head ached as if it had been crushed in a vice; while my miserable throat was skinned by the stomach pump and other engines of the medical science, which the staff surgeon had kept at work on me, as they afterwards said, for two consecutive hours.

“Poor Jacques Chataigneur was in the same wretched condition, and lay opposite to me, kennelled on a bed of straw, under the gothic canopy which covered the grave perhaps of some long-bearded hidalgo of old Castile.

“We alone recovered.

“The gay Chevalier de Vivancourt and his three comrades of la Garde Imperiale died; so did poor Jean Graule and all our servants; for the little fury Virginia had administered part of her infernal potion to them too. So to this hour, my friend, I entertain such a horror of all kinds of prepared wine, that I may safely say, ’tis not in the power of man, or even woman, with all her superlative cunning and witchery, to make me taste a single drop that is not pure as when it came from the wine-press.”

“And the ladies—what became of them?”

“Donna Elvira,” continued my garrulous friend, “disappeared from Madrid on that very night, taking with her the unlucky Virginia, and for a time we heard no more of them, save in the columns of the ‘Moniteur’ and ‘El Espanol,’ where, the Lord knows, our malheur made more than noise enough! May mischief dog their heels as two revengeful vixens. But I afterwards learned that the girl assumed another name, and, bestowing her hand on a certain hidalgo

of Alava, actually had the happiness to give me shelter one night on the retreat from Vittoria. My whiskers had grown, and she did not recognise me; *sacre bleu*, if she had! I was never discovered, and blessed my stars that I was sound, wind and limb, when I left her mansion in the morning—Ouf! let me think no more of it, for altogether 't is a story that makes me shudder."

"Excuse me, Captain St. Florian," said I, when he had ceased; "but on my honour, you make me blush for the army of France."

"*Morbleu!*" said he; "they were only Spaniards."

"But I have heard many an episode of horror blacker even than that of Donna Elvira, for I was one of those who followed up the retreating army of Massena, from the frontiers of Portuguese Estremadura, through desert fields and desolate cities, marked by fire and blood, and all that the wantonness and wickedness your devastators could inflict on a poor, a prostrate, and a defenceless people. I am warm, monsieur, but I pray you pardon me ——"

"Ah! he was a stern old routier, Massena, and handled the dons so roughly, that the Emperor named him rightly the 'child of rapine.' I care not for being his apologist, as I never either loved or admired him, and once positively hated the old pagan, for reprimanding me in general orders, because, on our retreat from the lines of Torres Vedras, I neglected to destroy the house of a poor old *hidalgo* near Santarem, who had been so kind to me, that I omitted him in the list of devastations to be made by my foragers. Ouf! I got a lecture that was printed in the '*Moniteur*,' and read at the head of every regiment in the division. But in revenge, that very night I affixed a scroll to the door of the marshal's quarters—

"'This is the residence of the mighty Massena, Prince of Essling and Duke of Rivoli, who has made more noise in the world by beating the drum than by beating the British!'

“Corbœuf! what a frightful rage the old Turk was in, but he could never discover the author of the pasquil, which made him the laughing-stock of the whole army. But the sparing of that hidalgo’s mansion and family was a most fortunate circumstance for me, as it was the means of saving my life three days after.”

“In what manner?”

“He ransomed me for a hundred dollars from some rascally frontier guerillas who had captured me, and were on the point of putting me to death. Ouf! ’t was a devil of an adventure that. Shall I tell it you?”

“If you please,” said I, lighting a fourth cigar.

“Well, then, listen, though perhaps it is not so much my story as that of a poor peasant whom the Estremadurans named Perez the Potter.”

CHAPTER XXII.

PEREZ, THE POTTER; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT.

“WHEN Massena retired before the impetuous advance of Lord Wellington, and left behind the boasted lines of Torres Vedras, you may remember that he selected the position of Santarem as one admirably adapted to keep in check the advance of your troops through the Portuguese frontier. While his division occupied their trenches on the hill above the Tagus, I was one day despatched on duty to the officer commanding the Cuirassier Brigade at Torres Novas, a town five leagues from Santarem, situated in the middle of a beautiful plain. It is surrounded by walls, and is overlooked by the castle with the nine towers, from which it takes its name.

“I rode without an orderly, or other followers, for the whole country was covered with our troops, and I had no dread of molestation, though desired by

Marshal Massena to take with me a section of dragoons, as part of the country through which I had to pass was rendered very unsafe by the residence and outrages of a certain Don Julian d'Aviero, a half-mad student of Alcala, who had gathered a band of deserter guerillas, and become a captain of robbers in the woods of Santarem. There his name had become terrible through all the Spanish and Portuguese Estremaduras, Alentejo and Beira. His midnight expeditions and attacks upon the detached houses and solitary quintas of friend and foe were characterised by singular and wanton cruelty; and in a state of warfare, where the country was possessed by two hostile armies, the pretexts of treason and espionage were never wanting.

"A wild yell informed the inmates that their dwelling was surrounded by the banditti of Don Julian; the doors were dashed in; the men, half-starting from their beds, were hewn to pieces; their wives and daughters were dragged away to suffer worse than death; the houses were pillaged, and then reduced to ashes. And many of these atrocities were doubtless attributed by us to you, and by you to us. Captives were carried off daily, but they were generally ransomed; if not, a shot from a carbine, or a stab from a poniard, and all was over!

"I thought of all these things as I pursued my solitary way by the foot of the mountains that skirt the plain of Torres Novas; but it was with less of alarm than pleasure. To me there seemed something charming in the lonely and knight-errant-like fashion in which I had thus ridden forth, in a strange country, among dangerous ways, and an unscrupulous people, with neither friend nor ally save my sabre and horse.

"The sun was verging towards the darkening mountains of Alentejo; but the atmosphere was still exceedingly close and sultry, for, hot and bright, the rays of the western sun were poured from a clear and cloudless sky, scorching with their warmth the

waving corn, and the myriads of wild flowers that covered the beautiful plain of Torres Novas.

"I was still far from the lines of Massena: the country seemed desolate and depopulated. I had no guide, and became apprehensive of losing my way, and wandering towards the British outposts. Once or twice I questioned a passing peasant, but was provoked by their sullenness and ignorance of their own locality.

" 'Señor,' said I, to a paisano, whom I met driving two mules harnessed in a rude cart, which was simply composed of the rough stem of a tree, from which two branches in the form of a fork rested, one on each wheel, and formed the axle—'Señor, how many leagues is it from this place to Santarem?'

" 'Three, señor Caballero,' replied the man, holding up three fingers.

" 'Bueno! are they long or short?'

" 'Short, señor.'

"There is, I know not why, a difference in the length of the Spanish leagues, as many a time and oft we found on the long line of march. After riding four or five miles further, and, being still uncertain, on meeting another peasant driving a borrico (an ass), laden with kid-skins of the mountain-wine, I inquired of him the distance from Santarem on the Tagus.

" 'Five long leagues, señor,' he replied, displaying four fingers and a thumb.

" 'Diable!' I muttered, and spurred on, for the sun had now sunk behind the blue waving line of the western Sierra.

"Near a roadside fountain I passed the bodies of three or four French soldiers, who had been wounded in a recent encounter with the outlaws of Julian Aviero, and had crawled there to quench their thirst and die. They had been completely stripped by the Spaniards, and their gory but honourable scars were blackening in the heat of the sultry day.

"On the velvet turf that bordered the road I softly drew up my horse, on observing behind the pedestal

of the fountain a villanous son of Israel practising dental surgery, by robbing the jaws of the dead; for the soldiers being generally young men, their teeth brought a good price in the dentist shops of Paris and Madrid. I had frequently heard of this revolting practice, but never till that moment had ocular proof that such existed.

"The operator was a man about forty, lean and hollow-visaged, with the brow of a villain, the eyes of a snake, the nose of an eagle, and beard like a cos-saque; he was enveloped in a loose blue gown, and his head was surmounted by a steeple-crowned sombrero, that had long lost every trace of its original colour. Near him lay a square mahogany box, like a pedlar's wallet, in which he carried his instruments and stock of dental wares.

"He was so busy with the relaxed jaws of a young soldier that he did not perceive my approach.

"You know how jealous we soldiers are of the treatment given to the remains of our dead comrades. *Maladetto!* my blood boiled. Dashing spurs into my horse, I plunged him right upon the dog of an Israelite; a kick from a hoof laid bare his skull, and stretched him prostrate on the earth. As he fell backwards I obtained a glimpse of his wallet, which bristled with poniards and pistols, from which I concluded him to be a robber of the living as well as of the dead; and I soon discovered my conclusions to be just.

"This *rencontre* occurred near a great olive wood, which was known to be the haunt of Aviero; and I rode as fast as possible to leave it behind before nightfall; but I had not gone half-a-mile from the fountain, when a sharp rifle shot whistled from a grove of olives on my right. My horse gave a snort of agony, and fell heavily forward, stone dead. A bullet had pierced his brain. I disengaged myself from the stirrups, and drew my sabre, but ere I could strike one blow in my defence, a hundred hands were upon me, and I was a prisoner, in the

power of a band of savage frontier guerillas—half soldiers, half robbers, and wholly demons. Diable! my life hung by a hair.

“Some wore broad hats, embroidered jackets, and yellow scarfs, with plush breeches; others had little other garment than their olive skins, and wore their flowing hair of the deepest black, gathered in netted cauls; but all were armed with rifles, daggers, and pistols, or with all manner of military weapons gathered from the fields of those battles which were every day fought in their vicinity.

“Oh, Monsieur! what a moment of misery was that when I found myself so completely at the mercy of those ruffian Spaniards, whom I equally despised and abhorred.

“Many a knife was drawn and many a blow struck at me; but in their very fury and anxiety to destroy me these wretches retarded, impeded, and wounded each other.

“‘Down with him! down with the Frenchman! Death to the Buonapartist! Maladetto!’ was the cry on every side.

“‘Caramba!’ cried one in a voice of thunder, ‘I will blow out the brains of the first that injures him. Frenchman and dog as he is, our laws must be respected. Away with him to the mountains, for Don Julian d’Aviero must decide his fate.’

“Aviero! my heart sunk; I was then quite in the power of the devil.

“Amid a storm of growling and swearing, and even fisticuffs, I was conducted through the wood, which was almost pathless and covered the face of the Sierra by which we ascended, to an old and ruined villa, belonging to the Duke of Aviero. It stood on the edge of a precipice that overhung the Tagus, and there Don Julian had for the present established his head-quarters. A recent attempt had been made, by a detachment of ours, under Jacques Chataigneux, to dislodge him; these had been repulsed with great slaughter; and on approaching the villa, I could dis-

cern vivid traces of the conflict—traces which its amiable and philosophical inmates cared not to trouble themselves as yet in removing.

“This noble residence of Don Julian's ancestors, with its marble vestibule and stately portico, its frescoed chambers and arcades of columns, round which the vine and the rose were clambering, had been no way improved by his occupation thereof. A balustraded terrace encircled it, and within and around it the dead French and guerillas were lying across each other in scores—many of them yet grasping their adversaries, just as they had fallen, without their hold relaxing, or the fierce expression which distorted their features at the hour of death passing away.

“Many of these men were my comrades, grenadiers of the 23rd, whom I could recognise, notwithstanding the alteration of their features.

“In the assault and defence, the doors and windows of this beautiful villa had all been blown to pieces; the walls were studded with bullets and spattered with blood, which appeared to have run like a rivulet down the staircase, to mingle with the waters of a shattered jet d'eau in the vestibule. At the head of the stair a barricade had been formed by a sideboard, a piano, and other furniture, wedged with bolsters and pillows, and books; and this point of assault had been fought for, like any breach in the glacis of Badajoz. Everywhere the bills and axes of the pioneers had been at work; but Chataigneur had been repulsed, and Don Julian remained impregnable and triumphant.

“In a noble apartment, the windows of which overlooked the Tagus and the vast plain that spread in its beauty towards the castle and city of Torres Novas, the ramparts of which were tipped with the last gleam of the set sun, Don Julian, with several of his desperadoes, sat over their cups of country wine, muffled in their mantles, and enjoying paper cigars, while their feet rested on a great copper bras-

sero of charcoal that stood in the centre of the marble floor.

“Don Julian, a remarkably handsome young man, but with a bold, reckless, and ferocious cast of features, received me with a low bow, which I could perceive to be partly ironical. His jacket of green velvet was richly brocaded and fastened with silver clasps; his breast was displayed by an open shirt, and had a crucifix engraven on it by gunpowder. He wore yellow breeches girt by a sash, red stockings and abarcas; but had no weapons save his sabre.

“When he addressed me, I expected to hear but my death warrant; judge how agreeably I was surprised by his saying,—

“Señor, though you are a Frenchman, and I might this moment put you to death as an invader of Spain, and as a revenge in some sort for the recent attempt made by your ruthless marshal on my residence here, I know you to be the officer who spared the mansion of old Don Juan Lerma, when empowered by your orders to destroy it. Don Juan is the only man for whom a lingering feeling of humanity has left in my breast an atom of regard, for he loved the old cavalier, my father, well. Being anxious to requite to you the kindness so lately done to him, and to prove whether his gratitude surpasses that of a robber, I request that you will write to him from this, my Villa of Aviero, and beg the ransom of one hundred dollars to free you from my troop, as I question very much if the state of Massena's commissariat will enable you to have so much loose cash about you.’

“You are right, señor; a hundred dollars! Diab! I never had so much money at any time. But what if the cavalier Lerma refuses?”

“You must die.’

“Morbleu!” said I, shrugging my shoulders.

“Such is the law of capture to which we have bound ourselves, by such oaths as men seldom hear. You will be accommodated with writing materials;

address a letter to the Cavalier Don Juan Lerma, and one of my people will convey it immediately to the city of Santarem.'

"Upon this, I wrote a hurried but anxious note to the old hidalgo, begging him to consider the kindness I had done him, the danger by which I was menaced, and pledging my honour to repay the hundred duros out of my first prize money. This system of kidnapping and extortion had become so common that, being doubtful of the answer, I saw the messenger depart with an anxiety which I laboured in vain to conceal by folding my arms and planting my feet on the brasserio, by smoking a cigar, sipping the Lisbon vino, and joining in the half frivolous and wholly ruffian chit-chat of Don Julian and his squalid myrmidons.

"In the midst of this I was a little startled to find my acquaintance, the Jew dentist, enter, with his box under his arm, a bloody cloth encircling his head and half concealing his basilisk eyes, which bent on me a demoniacal scowl of recognition; and I discovered to my consternation that this worthy, in virtue of being a greater fiend than his fellows, was no other than the lieutenant of Julian d'Aviero. But, without seeming to observe me, he advanced to the side of the latter, and whispered a few words in his ear.

" 'Ha,' said Don Julian, 'is it so? then our hellish compact must be observed. I am sorry for the little paisana, but there is no remedy. Hold, there, camarados! bring in the prisoners of Santarem—the potter Perez and the girl who was captured with him last night by our worthy Teniente Isacco Zendono.'

" 'The girl is his sister,' growled the Jew robber, in husky Spanish, as he threw off his blue gown and revealed his gaudy Spanish dress, and sash bristling with pistols and knives, 'and a fair sample of mother Eve's flesh she is—Bueno!'

" 'Curses blast you! bring them in, or'—and Ju-

lian, who always assumed the blustering ruffian to his own people, grasped a pistol.

“The lieutenant quitted his presence; but almost immediately returned, dragging in a stout peasant about three or four and twenty years of age. He had all the lofty air, the well-knit and erect figure of those peasantry on frontiers where the Portuguese are improved by intermarriage with the Spaniards. He wore a brown vest with loose sleeves, and breeches of bright yellow cotton, tied about the middle by a red silk scarf. His long raven hair was gathered in a wide silk netting, and hung in a heavy mass upon his neck. His hands were tightly pinioned by a cord, but he gazed about him with an air of reckless defiance, which, however, failed to intimidate the thieves, or to encourage his sister, a pretty-looking girl of sixteen, or thereabout, who clung to his arm in the utmost terror.

“Her coal-black hair was plaited somewhat after the fashion of the Basque women, in two gigantic braids, and reached below the flounces of her yellow skirt, which was short enough to expose, half-way up to the knee, her very handsome legs, encased in bright scarlet stockings which were elaborately covered with white braiding. Her little feet and ankles were equipped with open cut abarcas, interlaced with thongs of morocco leather, like the hose of your Highland soldiers. Her teeth and lips were a miracle, and her terror made her dark eyes glitter like diamonds. Ah! merci, monsieur, she was excessively captivating, that little paisana.

“Though such a little beauty is not uncommon in Spain, the robbers of Don Julian gazed upon her with gloating eyes of evil admiration and longing; many of them licked their huge blubber lips with grim and grotesque glee, as if anticipating kisses; while the poor sinking girl shrunk from their bold and villainous gaze, as she would have done from the eyes of so many serpents or fiends.

“‘Teresa, hold up your head, my dear girl; do not

droop before these base ladrones, stained as they are by a thousand atrocities. Dios! should innocence quail before guilt?' said the young peasant with a fearlessness that at once gained him my sympathy and admiration; and for a time I forgot my own troubles in those of the strangers. 'Be bold of heart, my sweet sister! We are possessed of that which can touch even the hearts of these bad men, and unlock the doors of their prison-house.'

" 'You are mistaken in this idea, Señor Perez el Cantarero,' said Don Julian, with a quiet sneer, while his band crowded round with lowering brows and gloating eyes. 'Quite mistaken, allow me to inform you. Your honest uncle, the abagado (O most honest lawyer of Santarem!) has refused to ransom you. Our messenger, the very reverend rabbi, Isacco Zendono, has come back just now empty-handed.'

" The girl shrieked and hid her face in the bosom of her brother, who gazed around him with a look of rage, astonishment, and stupefaction.

" Isacco, the Jew, burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, in which Don Julian and his comrades joined.

" 'Out upon ye, villains,' exclaimed Perez the potter, shaking his clenched hand at them.

" 'O Perez, por amor de mi,' urged his sister, in a breathless voice.

" 'Teresa, my poor Teresa,' muttered the brother through his hard-set teeth, 'I had doubts, dreadful doubts; but I expected not this. Answer, Señor Don Julian d'Aviero, does this black-hearted slave of Mammon, this villain of an abagado, forget that he retains in his repositories the inheritance left us by old Gil Perez, the alcalde of Santarem?'

" 'In truth, most blustering señor, most valiant cavalier of crocks and cans, your father's honest brother has not forgotten that important fact,' replied Julian d'Aviero, in his cool, dry way. 'The abagado will act true to his trade, by deceiving those who trust him. His trade! May the great Devil confound it

for it has stripped me of as fair an heritage as ever came from a miserly sire to a spendthrift son. Well, Señor Perez, in short, to possess himself of your two thousand dollars, and practise a little profitable conveyancing, your relative the lawyer has stoutly declined to ransom you, saith our messenger, swearing by the bones of St. James, he would not yield the hundredth part of a pezzo to save you from the jaws of hell.'

" 'Be it so,' muttered Perez, between his clenched teeth; 'in the world that is to come, he will meet with his reward.'

" 'Were it but to provoke the abagado, I would willingly set you free, Señor Potter; but the laws of this free community say nay.'

" 'But my sister——'

" 'Has found no more favour than yourself. Santos! You are a strange fellow, Señor Perez. Who the devil ever expects to find an apostle in the carcase of an abagado?'

" 'Madre de Dios! my poor Teresa!' said the young man, folding his sister to his breast; while she responded by an agony of grief and terror, such as I had never before witnessed.

" On her knees she bent before Julian d'Aviero, imploring him to spare her only brother, and to slay her, if he pleased; but her piteous cries and supplications, rendered yet more plaintive by the beautiful language of Spain, were drowned by the brutal jests, and whoops, and yells of the Portuguese robbers.

" When the hubbub subsided, 'Señor Cantarero,' said Don Julian, in his wonted cold and sarcastic manner, 'I have said that your ransoms are refused.'

" 'And what then, Señor Ladrone?' asked the paisano sternly.

" You must die—that is all," replied the captain, quietly knocking the ashes from his fragrant cuba.

" 'Die'

“ ‘Si, morir, Micer Perez el Cantarero,’ said he, with an ironical bow.

“ ‘T is hard to die thus, and unrevenged,’ said the peasant, looking round as if for a weapon; ‘but I am content, so that you release my sister, and swear upon the crucifix that she shall receive no harm.’

“ At this demand there was another horrid laugh; and the Jew, turning up his eyes, swore something in Hebrew at a request so unreasonable.

“ ‘Keep your mind quite at ease, Perez, amigo mio,’ said Julian d’Aviero, whose potations were now affecting his brain, and imparting to his manner a strange mixture of ferocity and jocose cruelty—‘do not be alarmed; your sister shall not die. Maladetto! dost think we have no taste or discrimination?’

“ ‘The Holy Virgin thank you!’ said the potter, with an odd mixture of fervour and ferocity; ‘my dearest Teresa, will——’

“ ‘Fall to the lot of the fortunate rascal to whom the happy dice assigns her,’ said the Jew lieutenant of the gang, pushing forward and jostling me, with such insolence that I had some difficulty in keeping my hands from his throat.

“ ‘Hark you, Master Potter,’ he continued, in his husky Spanish, which I cannot imitate. ‘We cast lots for the women we capture, if they be young and handsome. The men we poniard, if they cannot ransom their heads and hides, and then we bury them honourably in the chasm of the Tagus. The bones of some stout fellows are bleaching there, so you will find yourself in good company, I promise you. I owe you a grudge for the stroke your ‘cajado’ dealt on my pate yesterday, and so claim the first blow to-day. Arrojarse, camarados! fall on!’

“ He unsheathed his poniard and grasped the potter by the collar of his buckram doublet; but the descending blow was arrested by the uplifted arms of Teresa, who hung upon the villanous dog of Israel with the determination, if not with the strength, of a tigress, and poured forth a succession of cries and

threats, which astonished even the intended assassin ; then, sinking upon her knees, the winning girl pressed the murderer's hideous paw to her beautiful lips, beseeching him, in those accents to which a woman in deadly terror can alone give utterance, to spare her brother, her Perez, her dear and only brother, and she would become the servant, the slave, of the robber for her whole life.

“ ‘ Oh, spare my brother ; spare him ! O Señor Judio ; O Señor Don Julian, Caballeros, gracias, bandidos, por Nuestra Señora Santissima ! ’

“ ‘ My slave ? Demonios ! ’ chuckled the ruffian Jew ; ‘ that you may be at all events, or I may make short work with you, and so disappoint some honest fellow here. Off, off with you ! ’ and he shook her from him with so much violence, that on sinking to the floor, the blood gushed from her mouth and nostrils.

“ The Jew again raised his dagger, but Perez, filled with fury at the treatment of his sister, snapped, as if it had been a straw, the cord that bound him, and, grappling with the athletic ruffian, dashed him on the floor where he placed a foot upon his breast, and trod him down as one would do a serpent. The blood of the potter was up ; grasping another by the sash, he hurled him back with such force that the bandit was instantly slain ; for, on staggering, his head came so violently in contact with an angle of the wall, that in a moment his brains were dashed out, and he presented a dreadful spectacle as he lay, breathless and quivering, with his battered skull empty, as if struck by a grapeshot, and his blood and brains forming an oozy pool beside him.

“ Even the banditti seemed struck with horror for a moment, and a stillness ensued. They glared at their dead comrade and at each other, heedless of the groans and struggles of the half-stifled Zendono. The voice of the girl was again heard supplicating, for I had raised her up ; and she implored me to save her brother, for he had done no wrong, but shed

blood only in his own defence, and now remained motionless and terrified at his own temerity. The faint and half-articulate voice of Teresa recalled the band from the spell which, as I have said, their comrade's death had cast around them; and simultaneously they rushed with their knives upon the poor potter, and, pierced at once by innumerable and reiterated wounds, he sunk lifeless among their feet; and long after the last vital spark had fled, they continued to stab and slash, and otherwise mutilate the corpse until its bloody garments hung about it in tatters.

"'Tonnerre!' thought I, 'if my friend the hidalgo has neither the cash nor the inclination to ransom me, I shall be in a bad way.'

"By order of Don Julian, who had watched this scene of butchery with folded arms and an immovable aspect, the body was tossed over the window, from whence I heard it falling heavily from rock to rock before it reached the deep, dark water of a tributary of the Tagus, that struggled through a chasm in the cliffs, two hundred feet below.

"While the half-drunken banditti cursed and yelled like fiends, they cast the dead body of their comrade after that of the unfortunate potter, then wiped and sheathed their poniards; and all traces of the horrible occurrence disappeared, save the red blood gouts upon the floor, which these European Thugs never thought of cleansing; but trampled to and fro among that frightful puddle as heedlessly as if it had been so much spring water spilt by accident.

"Teresa had swooned, and hung on my arm in a happy state of insensibility.

"Isacco Zendono, who had suffered severely in the *melée*, during his prostrate position on the floor, now scrambled up, his heart burning with fury, and his body smarting with pain. He was plastered with the gore of the slain men; and its dripping from his sable beard and matted hair no way im-

proved his personal appearance, or increased the benevolence of his features.

"Growling at the weight of his comrades' heels, he demanded in a stentorian voice that lots should be cast for possession of the Señora Teresa; a proposition at once acceded to.

"Dice were produced, and the beetle-browed banditti crowded round a table, where they rattled and threw the dice in succession.

"The Jew uttered a yell.

"He had won!

"Diable! how like a victorious fiend he seemed, as, with a shout of villanous joy, he snatched the poor insensible victim from my arms, and with his poniard menacing any man who dared to follow, bore her off, bent double over his left arm, as easily as he would have done a folded mantle.

"Poor Teresa! she was so slight and young.

"Monsieur, I am not quite such a bad or wild fellow as, perhaps, you may think me; and I do assure you that I then felt my impetuous blood tingling in every vein. I sprang after the dog Zendono, but was restrained by the powerful and perhaps friendly arm of Don Julian d'Aviero.

"'Señor!' he exclaimed, in a whisper, 'are you mad? Remember your life is at stake, and ponder well on the helplessness of your condition among us.'

"The truth of this came bitterly home to my heart; I gave the speaker a fierce and reproachful glance, and folded my arms in silence.

"My heart bled for the unhappy girl.

* * * * *

"Frequently in that long and dreary night, when the mountain blast howled drearily through the shattered villa of Aviero, and moaned in the gorge through which the Tagus wound, I heard the cries and lamentations of the miserable girl, and the oaths and revelry of those to whom she was now abandoned.

"Ere daybreak her cries had ceased. Mille Baionnettes! they nearly drove me mad.

"What became of her I know not, as I never saw her again.

"Next day, an old Padre of Santarem came with a message from the hidalgo Don Juan Lerma, whose mansion I had spared. The priest had volunteered on this errand of mercy, as no other man in Santarem would venture within the reach of the terrible Aviero, to whom he paid two hundred pillared dollars, and I was conducted to within a few toises of the advanced sentinels of our out-piquets, by Don Julian in person, and we bade each other adieu with a very good grace, but without either tears or regret on my side, as may be well assumed; and so ended my mal-adventure in the wood of Santarem."

The Captain St. Florian concluded his story.

"Parbleu!" said he, "how dry my throat is with speaking so long, and I dare say I have tired you to death. But let us have one more bottle of Janette's champagne, and then we shall decamp soberly to look for more adventures. But I must be cautious, being for guard at the chateau to-morrow. You cannot mean to return to Lagny to-night?"

"I must; and 'tis high time we were off, Captain St. Florian; besides, I see Janette is decidedly sleepy."

"Ah! poor girl, yes."

"My horse is at an hotel in a street leading from the Champ Elysées."

"Ouf! a devil of a way from this. There is a church clock striking five. Nombril de Belzebub, 'tis morning!"

We hurriedly rose to depart. Janette had fallen fast asleep in the bar, and St. Florian kissed her brow as he passed and deposited the reckoning in her lap. The portière of the cabaret let us out, and we sallied through the street to find my hotel.

At the chateau, as the Parisians name the palace,

I bade adieu to the captain, and getting forth my horse, rode off.

The trumpets of the Austrian cavalry and the English drums were ringing on the early morning wind, as the reveillé roused the soldiers of the allied host in their several camps and cantonments.

The patrols of the gend'armes were retiring to their quarters; the sun was coming up in his glory, and ruddily in his morning light, amid the morning smoke of Paris, shone the huge façade of Notre Dame, and the burnished dome of the Hotel des Invalides.

Paris, with its tented parks and guarded barriers, was left behind; and I dashed at full gallop along the dusty road that under the shadow of many a vine trellis, and many an apple bower, led to my cantonments at Lagny on the Marne.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MAJOR'S STORY.

ON the Colonel concluding, there arose a contention between our surgeon, Mac Leechy, and the senior major, as to who should tell his story first; for "the steam" was now fairly up; but the matter was adjusted by seniority, like choice of quarters, or having the best bed in a billet, and the right of first mounting a breach, and other little contingencies of a military life.

"I was once nearly hanged by Wellington," said the Doctor to tempt us to listen; "for when I first joined the service, it was as an ensign, though I had my diploma of M.D."

"Hanged?" said Slingsby; "then you proved a King's bad bargain, Doctor?"

"Not half so bad as you, Jack," retorted our old medico; "but I'll tell you in a few words how it came to pass. When our troops were falling back

from Quatre Bras, upon the village of Waterloo, on that stormy 17th of June, which preceded the great battle, I was sent forward with sixteen men of the Scots Brigade to take possession of the principal inn as quarters for the Great Duke and his staff, and to save the house from being plundered or forcibly seized by any one else. We entered the village double-quick; I soon found the inn, and after posting my sentinels in front and rear, proceeded to investigate (from motives of personal interest) the contents of the pantry before the Duke arrived. In twenty minutes afterwards we heard musket-shots; I rushed out of the kitchen (where I had been consoling the terrified landlady, and deviling a drumstick,) to find my fellows firing at the French tirailleurs, who were now at the end of the village where they had lined a stone wall. We peppered them briskly; but four of my men had just fallen, when a Belgian officer, all covered with stars and lace, galloped up to me, crying, as he took the road to Brussels, “‘Fall back—fall back—Waterloo is surrounded, and you will be cut off!’

“I drew out my men and left the village double quick. At the other end of it, I passed a mounted general officer with his staff, who were sitting quietly and composed in their saddles; but he called to me with a loud voice,—

“‘Halt, sir—halt your men, and come here!’

“I obeyed, and lowered the point of my sword. Oh, there was no mistaking the keen grey eagle eyes, the high nose and white neckcloth; the little blue cloak and brass sabre of this personage. It was Wellington himself.

“‘In God’s name, sirrah,’ said he, fiercely, ‘why have you abandoned your post?’

“‘The village is surrounded——’

“‘It is not surrounded—a few sharpshooters fired a shot or two at our cavalry, but they have been all killed or taken.’

“‘A Belgian officer—

“‘Cowardice—rank cowardice,’ said Wellington, ‘and at a time like this! Provost Marshal—where are the Provost Marshal and his guard? A rope—get a rope, and hang this young fellow from the nearest tree.’

“I was in deadly terror, for I was then a raw lad, and did not perceive that this was, perhaps, only to frighten me; but at that moment Sir Denis Pack dashed up with some intelligence which was of more importance to Europe than the hanging of Ensign Mac Leechy, so Wellington troubled himself no more about me; I shrunk away to pick my half-devilled bone and to rejoin the Scots Brigade, who were bivouacked in a field near the Brussels road.

“Soon after Waterloo, I exchanged my ensign’s commission for a medical one, and have never since been in terror of being hanged by a Provost, or shot by a court martial.”

“Tush,” said the major, “I was once nearer being hanged than you, doctor; for I was tried, and sentenced, and, moreover, only escaped one noose to be caught by another—for I got my wife by it.”

Our major was a jolly and cozy old fellow, who was addicted to a little flirtation with married dames of mature age, and to making downright love to widows (if his good lady was absent), and invariably opened the trenches by affecting to consider them the sisters of their handsome daughters. He was a great favorite with us all; but, being married, he never dined at mess, unless when specially invited by some one. Thus we warmly welcomed our old major’s story, which he began without further preamble.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ESTELLA.

“I ENTERED the service,” quoth the Major, “when the Peninsular War was at its height, and my commission was signed by the first gentleman in Europe,

then Prince Regent; truly we had queer ideas of what constituted a gentleman in those days,

“‘In my hot youth, when George III. was king.’

“I joined our first battalion in Spain, and had more than enough of marching, fighting, and starving in the desolate province of Estremadura, where Marshal Macdonald and General Foy never gave us a moment to spare. I was wounded at La Nava, and at the storming of Almaraz. When I scrambled over the palisades, with my sword-arm in a sling, I remember a voltigeur officer rushing upon me with his sabre uplifted; but, on perceiving my wound, he lowered his weapon gracefully in salute, and passed on to encounter another. We took the garrison prisoners, blew up the works, and threw the guns into the Tagus. At night, when we buried the dead, by flinging them into their own trenches, I was shocked to perceive my generous and gallant voltigeur among them—cold and stiff—slain by a shot in his heart, and with his right hand still grasping the hilt of the same sabre with which he had threatened and so chivalrously spared me. I was at the defence of Alba, and with the covering army at Badajoz, and I fought at Victoria, where our colonel, the gallant Cadogan, was killed, and where we put up a statue to his memory; but so unlike him, that I am sure if the good man ever looks at it out of Heaven, he will never recognise himself.

“We had always hard fighting, for I belonged to the light troops; and so far as the head was concerned in those days, I was very well adapted for *that* branch of the service.

“My regiment, the Highland Light Infantry, belonged to the first brigade of the second division of infantry (Sir Rowland Hill's), and at the time when this little narrative opens was quartered at Aranjuez, a small town of Toledo, about twenty miles south of Madrid, on the left bank of the Tagus. Though we had been for some months in quarters of refreshment on the Portuguese frontier, and had there received

several supplies of clothing, &c., from Britain, in consequence of the rapid movements of the army, which, by turning the positions on the Ebro and Douro, had driven back the French under Joseph and Jourdan, making them to traverse the whole length of Spain in one short month, and the incessant activity of the light troops, my uniform was reduced to a mere mass of rags. My cap, a kind of Highland bonnet, checquered, but without feathers (like that still retained by the 71st and 74th Regiments), was worn into many holes, and the rain came through upon my head. My epaulettes, or wings, were reduced to black wire; my coatee, turned to purple and black, was, like my Tartan trews, patched with cloth of every hue; my sash had shrunk to a remnant; the pipeclay had long disappeared from my shoulder-belt, and the sheath of my claymore was worn away until six inches of the bare blade stuck through it. And such was the general appearance of the officers of our regiment, as, with our canvas haversacks, our blankets and cloaks slung in our sashes, and carrying wooden canteens, similar to those of the privates, we marched into Aranjuez, and defiled, with pipes playing and drums beating, towards the great summer palace of Philip II., which occupies a little island formed by the Tagus and the Xarama, and is surrounded by the most beautiful pleasure-grounds.

“In one hand I carried my sword, in the other a ham, which I had picked up when overhauling a French caisson. My lieutenant had a small wine-skin, and my ensign a round loaf under his arm; thus, we, the officers of the 1st company, looked forward, to what we deemed, in those hard times, a sumptuous repast, on halting in the quadrangle of the vast and silent palace, from which Joseph and his court had fled but a few hours before, leaving behind many a sign of their hasty departure. Here lay Turkey carpets half torn up; there, velvet hangings but half torn down; in one room were bales of fur-

niture, ornaments, and plate, packed but abandoned; in another lay the remains of a sumptuous feast; the wine was yet in the half-emptied glass; the fork remained in the breast of the turkey; the ashes of a large fire yet smouldered in the vast kitchen, and in each apartment of these long and magnificent suites, which traverse the whole palace of Philip II., were splendid Parisian clocks, with their gilt pendulums yet wagging under crystal shades, and all remaining in statu quo, just as the French fugitives had left them, on the approach of our advanced guard.

"We chose our apartment, seized utensils, and, after a bath in the sandy Xarama to refresh us after our long and dusty march, we sat down to a supper on my ham, the ensign's loaf, and the lieutenant's skin of the country wine. Fresh from the royal gardens we took fruit in abundance; for the season was summer, and the purple grape, the golden apple, and the ruddier orange, with the ripe pomegranate, were all to be had at arm's length from the tall, painted windows. Nor were cigars wanting: for, when investigating the contents of a certain press, I found several boxes, from which we supplied ourselves, and gave the remainder to the men of our company, who were solacing themselves in the adjacent apartments, and lounging on the velvet sofas, down ottomans, and satin fauteuils, on which the fair demoiselles of the usurper's court had sat but the day before.

"The quarter-guards were set; the out-pickets had been posted in the direction of the enemy; in the palace court, our ten pipes had sounded for the tatoo, and, wearied to excess, we lay down, some on beds, and some on benches, but many more on the hard floor, where we slept soundly, and heedless of the advancing, the marching, and skirmishing of the morrow; for we light troops had always our full share of the latter.

"I was in this luxurious state—for dry quarters, and a sound sleep after a hearty meal, are great luxuries to the campaigner—when I was shaken by the

shoulder, and I heard the devilish voice of our sergeant-major saying—

“ ‘ I beg your pardon, Captain—— ; the first officer for duty is required to take convalescents to the rear. They march an hour before daylight, and the adjutant sent me to warn you, sir, and say, the piper will blow the rouse in twenty minutes.’ ”

“ He retired, having delivered his orders ; and then, as a pleasant sequel to them, I heard the rain—the heavy rain of Castile, where every drop is the size of a walnut—pattering on the long range of palace windows which faced the east. No man ever left a warm down bed more unwillingly than did I the hard tiled floor of the sala. I rolled up my cloak and blanket, slung them with my haversack and canteen, and then groped about for a small portmanteau which contained all my goods and gear ; and, without disturbing my two comrades to bid them ‘ good-bye ’—for, poor fellows ! after so long a march as that of yesterday, to have done so would have been positive inhumanity—with half-closed eyes, I hurried along, stumbling over the sleeping soldiers, muskets, knapsacks, and broken furniture with which the vast halls and suites of chambers were encumbered. After losing myself for a time in that famous apartment of mirrors, where Godoy and the Queen were wont to perform fandangos, I reached the bridge of Toledo, as it is named from the road which crosses it ; and there I found the convalescents assembling, in the dark of a cold and rainy morning, for daylight was yet an hour distant, and I heard the heavy drops battering the tarred canvas covers of the wretched caissons, wherein the sick and wounded lay. I heard the rain also lashing on the parapets of the bridge, and raising bubbles on the rapid stream which swept below its arches.

“ There were not less than thirty waggons or bullock-cars filled by officers alone, many of them sick, or suffering from diseases produced by hardship and starvation ; others from wounds, and the amputation of legs and arms, by the stupid apothecaries’ boys,

who composed almost wholly our medical staff in the Peninsula. In rags and misery, almost shirtless and shoeless, they lay closely packed in the caissons among a little straw; and one—the weakest and most reduced—was the famous Irish assistant-surgeon, Maurice Quill, of the 31st Regiment. I had one officer of the 1st Dragoon Guards, who, being mad as a March hare, had an entire waggon to himself, and I heard him bellowing like a wild bull, above the rushing rain and the howling wind as I approached this mournful assemblage on the old bridge of Toledo.

“I received the lists and commissariat papers, &c., in the dark, from the brigade-major, who carried a lantern under his cloak, and, in bidding me adieu, bade me beware of Barba Roxa, or Red-bearded Sancho, a thief, whose exploits were then making some noise in Toledo and La Mancha. The few soldiers who accompanied me were also convalescents, on their way home to be discharged, and, consequently, were barely able to carry their arms. I had a French troop horse, captured in the scramble at Arroyo del Molino, and by my side rode the only effective man in the detachment, my orderly dragoon; who, for the good service he rendered me by his inborn bravery and fidelity, I shall ever remember with gratitude, Darby Crogan, a private of the 4th, or Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, and when I say he was every inch a true Irish soldier, further comment is needless.

“Though we had enough and to spare of fighting, I own that it was with no ordinary feeling of dissatisfaction I departed on this duty, leaving my comrades to push on towards the south, to fight and win the great battle of Vittoria, and drive the French from Spain; while I had the foreknowledge that there was never an instance known of an officer leaving the army, in charge of convalescents, without being involved in the most serious quarrels with the Spanish authorities, both civil and military. But there was no alternative for me; so, muffling myself in my cloak, after sharing with Darby Crogan a glass of

brandy from a certain convenient flask, which hung at my waist-belt, and after a good deal of galloping to and fro, swearing at muleteers and bullock-drivers, the cars were put in motion, and the march began just as the first streak of dawn glimmered dimly above the distant sierras.

“A company of *Les Chasseurs Britanniques* (who, though French deserters and ragamuffins of every kind, wore the red British uniform), under a Captain H——, marched also for Ciudad Real, and nearly at the same time, but were ordered to pursue a route apart from mine, by Santa Cruz de la Zarza, and down the other side of the mountains, by Corral de Almuquer and Madridejos.

“The morning had broken clear and cloudless, when, passing through an open tract of country, we reached Yepes, and the summer sun of Castile came up in all his burning glory. I generally rode about fifty yards in front of my party to avoid the incessant complaints and cries of the sick and wounded, whose ailments or sores were exasperated by the increasing heat and pitiless jolting of the bullock-cars, which had neither springs nor iron axles. The day was cloudless and scorching; the plain hot, dry, and dusty, all vegetation being burned out of it. No breeze came from the distant mountains; but a vast swarm of black flies, which floated like a vapour about us, gave incredible annoyance

“A poor young officer (lieutenant in an English light cavalry regiment) expired under the pain of his mortifying wounds and accumulated sufferings. This event caused a temporary halt. By the side of the mule-track, which crossed that arid plain, we hastily made a little grave, about a foot deep, and laid him down, yet warm, in his uniform, and coffinless. A little of the blood-stained straw from the waggons was spread over his face, and then we covered him up, heaping the dry dusty soil over him by our feet, by the butts of muskets, and blades of bayonets, to keep the wolves from disturbing his rest. Near this lonely

grave there flowed a little fountain from a rude stone duct, which had been made in the days of old, 'en tiempo antiguo,' as a mule-driver told me. In twenty minutes after, we were all again en route, with the mule-bells jangling and the wheels jarring, as if nothing had happened; but his place in the waggon was soon supplied, as every hour some of my convalescent guard became unable to endure the weight of their trappings, and had to be placed among the sick. Thus our progress was so slow that night was closing before we entered La Guardia, a small town, about sixteen miles from Aranjuez.

"As we clambered and toiled up the rocky ridge which it crowns, on the right bank of the Cedron, Crogan and I, who rode in front, were surprised to find the little town almost deserted, and that a few of the inhabitants who had lingered until we were close at hand, were retiring from it on the other side, some on foot and others on mules, but all bearing away their goods and chattels, beds and furniture. Entering, we found it empty; and as there were neither alcalde nor alguazils to go through the farce of distributing billets, we quartered ourselves wherever we best could. After conveying all the wounded from the waggons into the great convent (I carried Dr. Quill on my back, for he was weak as a child), there we laid them, in rows, on the tiled floors; and, after filling their canteens with water, left them to warm themselves the best way they could, for we were wearied almost to death by the slow loitering march of the past day, under a scorching Castilian sun.

"La Guardia is surrounded by a strong but ruinous fortified wall, which was built in the olden time to defend the district from the incursions of the Moors; and at each end it had a gate, whereon I posted a guard of a corporal and three men; for as the whole country swarmed with thieves and guerilla deserters, I knew not what picaros might be lurking in the old gypsum quarries near the Cedron.

"Darby Crogan and I took possession of a deserted

house in the main street. He lighted a fire, and being scarce of fuel, made pretty free use of the doors and shutters, chairs and tables; and we broiled on a ramrod, or boiled in a camp-kettle, our poor ration beef, sprinkling it with flour, and eating it without salt, for that was a commodity extremely scarce among us in Spain; hence, the flavour of our commissariat beef, after being carried in a canvas haversack, on a long day's march, under a burning sun, would have driven Soyer or his majesty of Oude into fits.

"We had scarcely concluded this miserable meal, which we shared fraternally—for on service, though discipline is never forgotten, the officer and private are more blended together, as real soldierly sentiment replaces empty etiquette—when we were startled by the report of two or three muskets in our immediate vicinity.

"'Hollo!' said Crogan, springing to the door of the house, 'the inimy 'ill be on us before we can say peas!'

"'Some guerillas, or picaros, or perhaps, Barba Roxa,' said I, setting down my flask of aguardiente, to listen.

"'Darby Roxy!—sure it 'ill be pleasant to meet a namesake.'

"'Not if he beats up our quarters, when we are in so poor a condition to resist any who might attempt it; and the watches and rings, &c., of so many sick officers are booty enough for a few enterprising Spaniards, who might try to knock the guard on the head. Look to our pistols, Crogan; bring up the horses, and we will ride forth to reconnoitre.'

"'Right, yer honour—I'm the man,' replied the active Irishman, as he looked to the priming of our pistols, loaded his carbine, and hurried to the shed close by, where our horses were chewing their rations of chopped straw; he saddled, and brought them to the door; and thus, in three minutes, we were both mounted. Meanwhile, the guards at each

gate of the little town had turned out; and, leaving word to get the whole party under arms in the street, accompanied by Crogan, I rode at a rapid trot towards that direction in which the flashes had been seen by our sentinels.

“La Guardia lay buried in obscurity; the night was dark, and a thin vapour veiled the stars; but no moon was visible, though at times a red meteor flashed across the sky. As the warm night-wind passed over the vast tracts of waste and untilled land, it was laden with the rich aroma of those innumerable little plants like *mignonette*, which flourish by the wayside in all the wild parts of Spain.

“‘Soft ground, sir,’ said Crogan, as his horse stumbled among the dry-scorched soil; ‘by the holy! this is just like still-hunting, only the bog, bad luck to it! is as dhry as a bone.’

“‘Hush!’ said I, reining in my horse; ‘do you not hear something?’

“‘By my troth I do,’ replied Darby; and as he spoke, a musket flashed about a quarter of a mile distant; and then we heard a faint cry, like a woman’s.

“‘There are no French in this neighbourhood,’ said I, surprised.

“‘But plinty of thaves and robbers, sir; and a nice meetin’ it ’id be for us.’

“‘Forward!’ said I; ‘we must just take them, like our wives, Crogan, for better or worse.’

“‘And, like the wives, a sorry takin’ it may be for some of us,’ said Darby, with a reckless laugh, as we rode on in the dark; and reaching the skirt of a cork wood, found a large Spanish coach, drawn by two mules—such a turn-out as one might have met in those days on the prados of Seville or Madrid—being ransacked by five or six ruffians, armed with pistols, knives, and carbines. A man lay dead among the long grass, near the trees; the mules were kicking and plunging in the traces; and while one ruf-

fian dragged out two ladies, the others were cutting open and emptying their portmanteaus. I drew my sword.

“‘Make your horse rear, sir, the moment we are fired at,’ cried Crogan, who was a practised trooper—‘twas by not doing so that Corporal Lanigan, of ours, got a ball in his chest, at Talavera—his first battle too.’

“‘Forward!’ cried I, ‘cut them down!’

“‘Whoop—hubaboo! this baste ov mine ’ud clear the rock of Cashel at one spring!’ exclaimed Crogan, who uttered an Irish yell, as we fell suddenly on the marauders; and though we were but two to six, routed them in a moment. Three shots were fired at us: I cut one fellow across the hand, and severed his fingers, which grasped the barrel of his musket; Darby stretched another among the grass, and, whether scared by his Irish shout, our sudden onset, or the dread that there were more of us, I know not but in a twinkling they had vanished into the wood, and we sprang from our horses to assist the ladies.

“‘Ay de mi! señor oficial!’ cried the younger, grasping me by the left arm; ‘a thousand prayers and thanks.’

“‘Ay! mi señor Caballero, muchas gracias,’ added the elder, making a stately, but profound curtsy to Crogan.

“‘Why, mam, you make a regular Irish dip,’ said he, raising his hand to the peak of his helmet. ‘But, sure you’ve dhropped something,’ he added, picking up a flask. ‘Oh, it can’t be this, at all—aggadenty, the thafe! Hurroo! it’s like raal Cork, but out of a bran-new cask.’

“The old lady now turned to me, perceiving that I was the officer, and prayed ‘el santo de las santos,’ and all the saints in heaven might bless us, for our courageous and timely succour.

“‘We are on our way to Ciudad Real from Madridijos, and were attacked in the wood. My señor escudero was shot, our outriders fled; and the la-

drones would undoubtedly have maltreated me—not that I cared for myself, señor, but my dear little goddaughter—la nina—the child—la nina Estella. It was all for her that I trembled’—and so forth.

“By the moon, which glinted for a time through the hazy clouds, I could perceive that the speaker was a middle-aged lady, very dark complexioned; and, though not handsome, possessing a tolerably good, even stately presence; and that her goddaughter, whose features were blanched by terror, had fine dark Spanish eyes, and a graceful figure, though somewhat undersized.

“I begged of them to be no longer alarmed.

“‘Señoras,’ said I, ‘my detachment is at La Guardia, close at hand; allow me to offer my escort to you, so far as Ciudad Real, for that, also, is my destination.’

“‘We owe you a thousand thanks, señor oficial,’ replied the gentle voice of la nina Estella, who seemed to be somewhere about eighteen. ‘Oh, I shall never forget that fellow’s red beard! Madre de Dios, what a size and colour it was!’

“‘O ho! then our friend was Sancho himself.’

“‘Ah, señor,’ said the old lady, ‘how happily we will avail ourselves of your kind offer.’

“‘Good—I shall have pleasant companions for the remainder of this most unpleasant journey,’ thought I, beginning to repack the half-rifled mails.

“‘We are travelling in great haste,’ said the señora.

Is your detachment composed of horse or foot, Caballero?’

“‘It partakes of both, señora; being thirty waggons of sick and wounded.’

“‘Sick and wounded! O madre de Dios! ’tis quite a travelling hospital; thirty waggons—a lazaretto—and I have lost my priceless relic of St. Margarida the Scot. Oh, señor valaroso, we owe you a million of favours, but will rather proceed alone. And here is this rogue, Pedro, come back with his mule. Ah, false coward, to leave you

young mistress in such peril. I will have you well beaten when we reach Ciudad Real; I will, sir. What would have become of us, but for the miraculous arrival of the señor oficial?’

“While I assisted the trembling Pedro to restrap the portmanteaus, and put the mules in order, a colloquy was proceeding between Darby Crogan, and the Spaniard whom he had levelled when the fray first began.

“‘Silence, now,’ I heard him say, while striking the butt of his carbine to shake the priming; ‘it will soon be all over wid ye; so die aisy—do, and don’t be bothering me.’

“‘Ay, por amor de Dios, Señor Inglesé,’ implored the Spaniard on his knees.

“‘Señor Inglesé, indeed!’ said Darby, testily, as the aquardiente mounted into his brain; ‘is it an Englishman you’d call me, you rascally Spaniard, and I, praise God! a dacent Irishman, like my father and mother before me?’

“‘Ay de mi, Señor Dragone——’

“‘Dragon, is it, now! I have a name, Mr. Spaniard, as good as your own, for lack of a better, and that is Darby Crogan, ould Widda Crogan’s boy, at the four cross roads, near the bog of ——; but what am I prating about? To make a long story short, prepare for your wooden surtoo, and make a clane breast you spalpeen of the earth, you!’

“‘Come, come, Darby,’ said I, ‘let him go; he is only a poor rascal of a Murcian.’

“‘It’s only makin’ game of him I am, your honour; but sure I am that his being, as you say, a marchent won’t make him feel dyin’ a bit more,’ replied Darby, uncocking his carbine with an air of discontent. ‘Richly he desarves to die, for he fired his pistols at me twice; the curse of Cromwell be on him!’

“‘Away now,’ said I, pointing to the wood; ‘vayan usted con Dios, or demonio, if it suits you better; and see, villain, that we meet no more!’

“With a dark gleam in his eye the disarmed robber slunk away, and I saw that his face, where not streaked with blood from Darby’s sword cut, was ghastly pale with hate, fear, and fury.

“We placed the ladies in their antique caravan-looking coach; buckled their baggage on the pyramidal top thereof; furnished Pedro and another servant with the arms and ammunition of the two robbers; promised to see the unfortunate escudero interred, a promise which we never performed; and after escorting them some miles beyond the cork wood, bade them adieu, receiving a pressing invitation to visit them at Ciudad Real, ‘where every one knew Donna Emerenciana de Alcala-de-los-Gazules,’ which name I give myself no small credit for remembering. We then returned to La Guardia, and for a time thought no more of the affair.

“I had ordered the drum to be beaten before daylight, but it was not until two hours after it that the whole of the sick and wounded were again stowed into their waggons, and en route; for in the back-garden of the convent we had to bury those whom we found dead.

“Then again began that melancholy chorus of groans and cries of pain, mingled with curses in English and Spanish, the cracking of whips, and jingle of bells, as the obstinate mules and lazy bullocks, which drew the rude cars, were urged to motion; and over wretched roads we departed from La Guardia, towards the mountains.

“Passing over the ground of the last night’s adventure, Crogan picked up something which glittered amongst the grass; it proved to be the portrait of a young lady, in a veil, flowing over a high comb; and in her well-arched eyebrows, fine dark eyes, roguish mouth, and fascinating smile, I recognised Donna Estella.

“‘Bravo! a delightful souvenir of La Guardia,’ said I; and, after admiring it for a time, consigned it to my breast-pocket. ‘Darby. I will owe you a dollar

for this when I draw on the paymaster.' I gazed at it frequently on the march, and every time I did so my interest in the original increased (but bah! do not think I was fool enough to fall in love with a mere miniature), and I resolved that if she was to be found in Ciudad Real I would certainly discover and visit her.

"Again a black cloud of flies covered the whole of us; several cars broke down; and such was the terrible nature of the road that one fell entirely over a precipice, bullocks, wounded, and all; and then so great was the delay occasioned by the various casualties, that evening came on before we reached Mora, which is only ten miles from La Guardia. So the reader may have some idea of the tedium of our progress.

"Mora I found also abandoned by its inhabitants, who fled at our approach, carrying with them all provisions and everything else which could be borne away. Many of the houses appeared to have been recently burned, for flames were yet smouldering in three of them, and in another two men were lying dead; one shot, the other bayoneted. Being certain that there were no French in the neighbourhood, or nearer than Burgos and Navarre, I was at a loss to comprehend the source of this terror and outrage: but, influenced by anxiety to be nearer Ciudad Real, and to have my defenceless detachment disposed of for that night, I pushed on, in hope of reaching a small village, which, as my 'route' indicated, lay about ten miles further off.

"Descending from Mora, we traversed a plain which lies between two sierras that terminate at Porzuna, in La Mancha: and if our progress was slow by day, it was slower still by night. The heat was yet excessive; a thick impalpable dust floated about us; the air was close and still; there was not a breath of wind. Our thirst was intense, and a murmur of satisfaction arose from my mournful cavalcade when the blackened sky, and the croaking of the frogs, an-

nounced rain; and when it did come, it came in torrents. Then, raising the covers of the waggons, the wretched patients thrust out their pallid faces and trembling hands to catch the heavy drops. The dusty plain soon became transformed into a sea of mud, and the poor convalescent guard sank above their ankles at every step, while, deeper still, the mules went above their fetlocks.

“Anxious and impatient, accompanied by my orderly, I rode forward a few miles, but failed to discover the said village; the whole district was desolate, and being without a guide, I feared that we had lost the way. On returning I found matters still worse; for, taking advantage of my absence, the villainous Spaniards, by a preconcerted arrangement, had simultaneously cut the traces of their mules and bullocks, and (though my guard shot a few of them in the attempt) had fled, leaving the sick and wounded to die in the wilderness.

“I cannot say whether anger or despair was my prevailing emotion; but to be left thus, with three or four-and-twenty waggons (for their number was now reduced), full of sick and dying men, among the mountains of Toledo, without provisions, and without a medical officer, was not very pleasant. Though the rain was still falling, as it falls only in Spain (like one ceaseless and tremendous shower-bath), Crogan and I departed at a gallop after the runaways, but could only overtake one; and, as he would neither halt nor obey us, we fired at him with our pistols, and, breaking his leg, left him in the same condition he had left so many of our comrades.

“Aware that not a moment should be lost in procuring a fresh team, we turned in the direction of Toledo, and ascended the sierra, half blinded by the rain which lashed in our faces, and, by swelling the streams from the hills, was fast making the valley between them a sheet of water

“‘A fine thing it will be, your honour,’ said Crogan—‘for I’m just in the mood to be savage—if we

fall in with the Rapparees that rummaged over the ould lad's, last night, and sacked Mora and La Guardia.'

"Never mind, Darby, my boy, you will die in the bed "of honour" then.'

"Divil a one of me cares—though, by my sowl,' he added, as our horses plashed fetlock-deep in water, 'I would like that same bed of yer honour's to be a dhry one.'

"So would I, Darby, but remember—

"Why should we be melancholy, boys,
Whose business 'tis to——die?'

"By the hokey! that ditty sounds very like as if the man that made it, sir, had been up to his neck in a bog at the time. But there are lights!'

"And the rain is abating, too.'

"To be brief. After a ten miles' ride, we reached Almonacid de Zorita, a small town of New Castile, where we roused the alcalde from his bed. He summoned his alguazils, and they, after an infinite deal of trouble, collected by impress all the cattle in the place, amounting to about twenty mules, and as many bullocks. The alcalde assisted us with ill-concealed reluctance, and told me that he and the alcalde of Mora had that morning transmitted to the commandant at Ciudad Real an account of certain outrages, and lawless impressment of mules, committed by a British detachment, at Mora and La Guardia.'

"You must mistake, Señor Alcalde,' said I, angrily, for I was drenched to the skin at the time; 'the only plunderers of La Guardia, if I may judge from personal experience, are true Castilians.'

"The Marquis of Santa Cruz shall judge,' said the alcalde, showing us to the door. 'Adieu, señores.'

"Good-bye, old gentleman, and bad manners to you,' said Crogan, as we leaped on our horses, and, recrossing the sierra reached the waggons about day-

break: and though sleepless and exhausted, I was but too happy when the new team was traced to them, and the whole were once more on their way towards La Mancha.

“Slowly and wearily we toiled on by the banks of the Algador, and again crossing the mountains, near a lake into which it flows, reached Guadalerza, all but overcome by heat and fatigue. I remember that near the lake (which was literally alive with adders and small snakes) there stood a solitary convent; and as we passed its walls, the fair recluses waved their handkerchiefs from their narrow gratings, with many a cry of ‘viva los Inglesos,’ so long as we were within hearing. From Guadalerza, fortunately, the inhabitants had not fled, and they answered promptly and readily the piteous cries of our sufferers for water, which was supplied to them in crocks and jars, that were filled and emptied as if to quell a conflagration.

“The village of Fuentelfresno, which overlooks those sands from whence the Guadiana is supposed to spring, was our next halting-place, but its miserable and impoverished inhabitants were totally unable to afford us rations of any kind; and there several of the wounded, whose sabre-cuts or gunshot wounds, by the jolting of the waggons, had broken out afresh, expired. There were two officers and four soldiers, whom we buried in one hole (alas! I cannot call it a grave), under an old orange-tree, near the Jarama. Finding that it was useless to halt in a place where we were in danger of starving, we went further on, and bivouacked nine miles beyond it, near a little runnel of spring water, on a fine green plain. The soundest sleep that ever closed my eyes was enjoyed there, on that soft grassy sward, beside my horse’s heels; but I cannot omit to mention the terror by which it was broken.

“My charger snorted, reared, and tried madly to break away from the peg to which I had picketted him.

“I raised myself on my elbow, and looked around

me. The waggons were all closely drawn up side by side: the escort were sleeping among their piled arms, and, muffled in their great-coats, our four sentinels stood motionless, about three hundred yards distant. The moonlight was clear and beautiful. Suddenly something reared its head close beside me; I shrunk under my blanket, and, lo! a frightful snake, nearly fifteen feet long, passed over the whole bivouac, hissing and gliding; but, fortunately, without biting any one, it disappeared into a little thicket of laurels and underwood which grew near us.

“ ‘Och, this Spain!—snakes, too—divil mend it!’ I heard Crogan muttering in his sleep; ‘more ov it yet! and I have never had a raal good potato down my throat since I came into it.’

“Next day, the sun-burnt plains of La Mancha lay before us; but ere the intense heat of noon, we reached Fernancaballero, in the partida of Piedrabueno; and there (so exhausted were my soldiers, and so terrible the complaints of the wounded), though my route permitted me to tarry but one night, I was compelled to halt for two additional days, an indulgence which nearly cost me my life. In the early morning, when visiting the quarters of the sick and wounded, to render them any assistance in my power before marching, I became aware that a person was following me through the dark, muddy, and unpaved streets of the mountain Puebla.

“As a soldier, habitually cautious, and, as a campaigner, aware of the Spanish character, I grasped the hilt of my Highland sword, and walked watchfully on.

“This man, by whom I had certainly been dogged and followed for some time, was now joined by two others, and the three accompanied my steps, remaining close behind. Crogan was looking after our horses, and I had no other orderly or attendant; but resolving that if their intentions were bad to anticipate them, I halted, and confronting the trio, said, as if without suspicion,—

“ ‘Señores, que hora es?’

“ ‘Son los quatro, Caballero,’ replied one, gaping at me with surprise on being so suddenly accosted ; but I saw the ominous gleam of two knives, as they were secretly drawn from the broad worsted sashes of his companions, who skilfully endeavoured to conceal the act. Quick as lightning, drawing a pistol from my belt, I fired a bullet right at the head of one, whose enormous red beard the flash revealed to me. The ball tore open his cheek, and carried away his left ear. His comrade rushed upon me, but I received him by thrusting the muzzle into his mouth, and hurling him furiously back. On this they all took to flight ; but not before I perceived that the wounded man had his left hand swathed in a bandage.

“ ‘O ho, Señor Sancho, la Barba Roxa!’ said I, recognising the robber whom I had maimed at La Guardia ; ‘I thought your voice was not unfamiliar to me.’

“ I hurried to the muster-place, in a frame of mind that struggled between wrath at my narrow escape, and triumph at the victory I had won ; but, in ten minutes after, the drum beat, and, replacing the sick in the waggons, we moved off.

“ Our march of fifteen miles from Fernancaballero we got rapidly over ; for Crogan and I having found no less than twenty-five mules grazing near the Alzuer, which there flows through a fertile plain, many of them bridled, as if just abandoned by their riders, we yoked them to the waggons, and entering Ciudad Real, the capital of La Mancha, passed at a rapid pace through its broad, straight, and well-paved streets, to the great Plaza, or principal square.

“ ‘The Lord be praised!’ thought I, as the train halted, and I gave in my papers to the Spanish town-major, Don Jose Gonzales y Llano, a field-officer of that regiment of Leon, which fled, en masse, from the field of Vittoria. ‘My duty and my troubles are over together.’

“ But I was grievously mistaken, as I might have

augured from the manner of the town-major, who curled his mustaches, and shifted from one foot to the other, like a man who has something unpleasant to say, but dares not.

“While the occupants of the waggons were being conveyed to hospital by fatigue-parties of Spanish soldiers, and my guard joined a detachment of convalescents, who, under another officer, were on their march towards the castle of Belem, I soon became aware that I was an object of marked attention to the denizens of Ciudad Real. A vast crowd had gathered in the Plaza, and I saw many men, particularly paisanos, gesticulating violently, and pointing to me, while the muttering gradually rose into shouts of ‘Maldetto! mueran los Inglesos! Perro! ladrone! bandido!’

“‘What the devil is the meaning of all this?’ thought I; and indignantly pushed my horse right through them. On this the cries redoubled, and the crowd increased so fast, that I was fain to ride at a trot towards the house of a guantero (a maker of those gloves for which Ciudad Real is famous throughout Spain), on whom I had been billeted. There I found Darby Crogan awaiting me, breathless, exasperated, and carbine in hand, for he, too, had been followed in the same manner by a mob, who shouted, yelled, threw mud, stones, and rotten melons, with every missile which the uncleaned streets so readily afforded. We were perfectly at a loss to comprehend the cause of treatment so unusual and so unmerited.

“‘El guantero, our patron, is as cross as two sticks, or a bag of ould nails, devil mend him! and unless your honour has a coin about you, it’s but a cowl’d supper we’ll have,’ said Crogan, as we entered the sala, or principal apartment of the house.

“‘I have not had a peseta since we left Mora,’ said I; ‘but here is the patron at supper, on a cold fowl, too! we are just in time.’

“‘Sure he’ll ask us to ate wid him—Och! for the smalles^t taste in life!’ sighed poor Darby, for our

food had been principally roasted castanos during the two previous days, so miserably was the Spanish commissariat conducted. The patron was certainly at supper; but, instead of welcoming us to his house as the deliverers of Spain, who had driven the usurper from Torres Vedras to the Douro, from the Douro to the Ebro, and from thence towards the Pyrenees, he barely bestowed a bow upon us, and desired his servant to conduct me to one room and Crogan to another. Amazed at the coldness of this reception within, which corresponded so exactly with the ungenerous treatment of the mob without, a storm of indignation gathered in my heart; but being aware that a strong Spanish garrison occupied the citadel, and that the Dons were lads who did not stand on trifles, I pocketed my wrath and turned away, resolving on the morrow to discover Donna Emerenciana and la nina Estella.

“‘Blue blazes!’ grumbled Darby; ‘are we not to have a ration of something to-night? Lord, sir, you don’t know how hungry I am, for the two insides o’ me are sticking together. I wish we had hould of that darling pullet.’

“‘So do I, Crogan, and that the old guantero had hold of the horns of the moon.’

“‘Wid his fingers well greased, the ould thief! Never mind, sir, wait till they’re all asleep, and if I lave a place unransacked, I am not the boy of ould Widdy Crogan, at the four cross-roads.’

“The sully looks of the glover were reflected by those of his wife and servant, a buxom Basque woman, who wore her coal-black hair plaited into one long tail, which overhung her thick woollen petticoat of bright yellow. Her stockings were scarlet; and I saw Crogan squinting at her well-turned ankles, cased in their neat leather abarcas, as she tripped before us, up the steep wooden stair that led to my apartment. The brown-cheeked Basque bade us ‘good-night,’ in bad Spanish, set down the light, and on being told that one room would do for the

soldier and myself, withdrew. Crogan placed a few chairs against the door, and near them lay down on the floor, with his carbine loaded and half-cocked. Without undressing, I threw myself on the bed, with my drawn sword beside me, for the uproar still continued in the street; but long before its din had died away, we were both buried in profound sleep—the deep and dreamless slumber of long weariness and toil.

“From this happy state I was aroused about midnight by a loud noise. Sword in hand, I sprang up, and Darby’s promise to overhaul the patron’s pantry flashed upon my mind. But, lo! a lantern glared into my eyes; and I saw the brown uniforms, red facings, silver epaulettes, bronzed features, and enormous mustaches of several Spanish officers, who surrounded me with drawn swords. Among them I recognised Don Jose Gonzalez y Llano, the town-major, by whose orders I was roughly seized and disarmed. The lantern was held rudely before my face, then to my belt-plate and the buttons of my coat.

“‘The seventy-first regimento infanteria de Escotos,’ said one.

“‘La division de Don Roland Hill,’ said another.

“‘Señores, what is the meaning of this intrusion, and how dare you lay hands thus upon me?’

“‘The Marquis of Santa Cruz de la Zarza will tell you that,’ said the little major, insolently.

“‘Then where is the marquis?’ asked I, furiously.

“‘At his palace, where he waits you, and requires your presence,’ said a young officer, who wore the cross of St. James and the splendid uniform of an Ayudante de Campo. ‘Come with us, señor,’ he added, politely. ‘I beg to assure you that resistance is worse than useless; so permit me, for the present, to receive your sword.’

“I handed the young aide-de-camp my belt and scabbard.

“‘Gentlemen, I beg you to remember that I am an officer bearing his Britannic Majesty’s commis-

sion.' And without saying more, I accompanied them from the house of the glover, under escort of four Spanish soldiers, who surrounded me with fixed bayonets. In silence we traversed various streets, which were buried in darkness and obscurity; and I saw nothing of Crogan (for I had been seized while he was on his exploring expedition); yet though anxious and perplexed, I maintained a haughty silence, and disdained to question my conductors.

"The bell of the cathedral tolled midnight as we entered the great Plaza, and saw before us the stately palace of the marquis brilliantly illuminated, for he was giving a magnificent fête in honour of his patron saint, whose festival had occurred on the day that had passed. From the lofty latticed windows, four-and-twenty lines of variously-coloured light fell across the great Plaza of the bull-fights, and shed their prismatic hues on its plashing fountains. A flight of marble steps led us to the vestibule, where a Spanish guard of honour was under arms, with fixed bayonets; and, passing between their ranks, we ascended to the grand saloon of the palace.

In that magnificent apartment, decorated in the florid and profusely-gilded style of Charles the Fifth's time, filled with a deluge of light from crystal chandeliers, and over a slippery floor of clear and tessellated marble, I was led by my conductors through the glittering crowd of guests. On every hand I saw the brown uniforms, red facings, and silver epaulettes of the Spanish line, the blue and silver of the Portuguese, the green of the Cazadores, and the black velvet suits of old-fashioned cavaliers, wearing the crosses of St. James and of Calatrava. The ladies wore, almost uniformly, dresses of black or white, but with a profusion of the richest lace. Many of them looked like beautiful black-eyed brides, for their brows were wreathed with flowers, or they had one fresh red rose among their dark glossy hair, placed just beside the comb, from which fell that sweeping veil which like a gauzy mist floated about their superb

figures. For years I had not looked on such a scene.

“‘Madre de Dios! what an officer!’ ‘O! Santos! that a British officer!’ ‘Morte de Dios! he a cavalier!’ were the exclamations in every varying tone. I was led along the saloon; the music ceased in the gilded gallery; the dancers paused, mingled, and crowded about us; then reflecting that I had come straight from the camp and field, where my comrades were facing danger and death for these same Spaniards, I thought the exhibition made of me by the Major Don Jose Gonzalez, of the regiment of Leon, alike scurvy and ungrateful. Our division of the army had not received a farthing of pay for six months at that time, and many a brave fellow fell at Vittoria and the Pyrenees without receiving his hard-won arrears, which, more than probably, his relations never obtained either.

“I was in the same plight in which I had marched from Aranjuez; my wings worn to black wire; coat purple, and patched with grey and blue at the elbows; my Tartan trews a mass of darns; scabbard, as I have said, six inches too short for the claymore; shoes all gone at the toes; and my last shirt all gone too, save the wrists and collar. But I was weatherbeaten as a smuggler; and I looked more like a soldier than the pomatumed Dons of the Spanish line, or the Cavaliers of Calatrava, who turned up their mustaches and muttered ‘basta!’ as I passed them, to where the Marquis stood, with a lady leaning on his arm

“Don Christoval, of Santa Cruz, was a tall, gaunt man, with a long Castilian visage, black lack-lustre eyes, and a solemn air of lofty pomposity. His mustaches were curled up to his ears. He had an enormous basket-hilted toledo depending from a sling-belt, and carried his handkerchief stuffed into the hilt thereof. He wore the uniform of a Spanish lieutenant-general, and had various little gold and silver ornaments sparkling on his breast. I was

aware that a graceful and bright-eyed young girl, in white lace, with her head wreathed by a superb tiara of brilliants, leaned on his arm ; but so solemnly severe was the brow of the Marquis and so brief his greeting, though in the old style of Castilian courtesy, that he riveted my whole attention. Besides, I was not a little indignant at the unceremonious manner in which I had been brought before him, and made a spectacle to his guests.

“ ‘Señor Don Christoval,’ said I, ‘for what am I brought—I may say dragged—hither from my billet, after a tedious march, and after having duly delivered over my detachment, according to my orders from head-quarters?’

“ ‘Señor official,’ replied the Marquis, with a look of grave severity, ‘you are charged with murdering two Spaniards, carrying off twenty mules from La Guardia, and levying other contributions in the partida.’

“ ‘Who dare to be my accusers?’ I asked, thunder-struck at such a charge.

“ ‘The alcalde of La Guardia, whose brother is one of the slain ; and Alonzo Perez, a master-muleteer of Fuentelfresno, whose mules you carried off.’

“ ‘Marquis, on my honour as a British officer and gentleman, I deny this.’

“ The Marquis smiled coldly, as he replied,—

“ ‘To-morrow we will confront you with the worthy alcalde ; and as for the mules, the owner recognised them this morning, drawing your waggons into Ciudad Real. Each animal has a private notch in its ears.’

“ ‘Marquis, I beg to assure you ——’

“ ‘Sir—no more. Here I cannot listen to explanations. I might place a guard over you, but nevertheless consider yourself a prisoner, and believe that any attempt to escape will be deemed but a proof of guilt. Retain your sword—partake of our hospitality ; and I hope, señor, that the morrow will find you prepared to refute these dark charges.’

“ He waved his hand with such an air as a Castilian

noble could alone assume, and with a lofty gait strode away: then in his daughter, who swept on by his side, for the first time I recognised the young lady I had rescued at La Guardia, the original of the portrait Darby had found, and which at that moment I had upon my person.

“Her large dark eyes dilated with astonishment, and then sparkled with the recognition, which the punctilio of the place or her father’s pride and severity, together with my tatterdemalion aspect, prevented her avowing; and thus, though I had saved her life—yea, more than her life—at the risk of my own, this dazzling creature passed away and left me, without a word of thanks or courtesy.

“I do not remember that I felt either the alarm, horror, or astonishment that might be supposed consequent to an accusation so startling as murder and marauding. I can only account for this by the deadness of feeling and of all sense of danger which results from actual service and warfare. But there was one emotion which I felt deeply—an angry pride; aware that I was an object of aversion and suspicion to the gay guests of the Marquis, among whom the fat and ferocious little town-major made himself very conspicuous in laying down the Spanish military law on the enormities I had committed. The hidalgos gazed at me indignantly through their eye-glasses; the dark-eyed donnas peeped timidly through the openings of their veils, and ‘matador, borrachio, Inglese ladrone,’ were the gentlest of the epithets I heard muttered by many a pretty lip. My heart swelled with rage, and instead of joining the dancers, or aiding in the onslaught made upon the viands which covered the long tables of an adjoining saloon, between lofty epergues and vases of crystal and silver, filled with summer flowers, I stood aloof with folded arms, and felt the smarting of a wound received but a few months before—and that wound was received for Spain, and on Spanish ground!

“At a little distance I saw the Donna Estella whis-

pering to her father's aide-de-camp. A minute afterwards he approached me.

"'Señor,' said he, 'if you will pardon the advice of a friend, I beseech you to retire to your quarters, for all here view you with hostile eyes; and, as a brave soldier, to whom my little cousin owes (as she has told me) her life, I cannot afford to see you thus misused. To-morrow, I hope, will see these clouds dispelled; meantime, allow me to accompany you. I have here a spare apartment, to which you are welcome.'

"All places were alike to me; I accepted his offer with gratitude; and, as we descended to the vestibule, the first person I met was honest Darby Crogan, with his sword under his arm, and his keen grey Irish eyes sparkling with rage; and he pushed the laced lacqueys right and left.

"'I have heard it all, sir,' said the brave fellow, who had been anxious about me; 'and mighty hard it will go wid you. It was all the doin' of that capthin of the Chaseers Britaneeks, who came out of his own route into ours, ransacked La Guardia, and carried off the mules (bad cess to them!). They were found with us, and the owner is ready to swear by this and by that, and by everything else, that you are the man, and these are his mules, as he knows by the holes punched in their ears, and to these holes he is as ready to swear as to his own two eyes.'

"'True, Darby; but how is all this to be explained to these hostile and obstinate Spaniards?'

"'Kape your mind aisy, sir; there are four good hours till daybreak yet, and if I don't astonish them thaving Dons, I am not Darby Crogan of the 4th Dragoon Guards.'

"On the terrace of the palace, which had anciently been the head-quarters of that celebrated fraternity, the Santa Hermandad, founded in 1249 for the suppression of robbers, I walked to and fro for half an hour with the aide-de-camp, enjoying a cigar, talking

of the war, my own mishap, and longing to ask a few questions about his dark-eyed cousin, with whom her miniature had made me so intimately acquainted. The glorious moon was rolling through an unclouded Spanish sky, pouring a flood of silver light into the Plaza and court of the palace, on the towers of the great church, and the magnificent hospital of Cardinal Lorenzana, the good and wise Archbishop of Toledo. The gardens of the Marquis were all lighted up by the same white radiance; the foliage of the citron trees was edged with silver and laden with perfume; the rose-trees hung their dewy blossoms over the marble fountains, the clear waters of which plashed and sparkled in the moonlight. After a pause, I ventured to ask—

“‘What is the name of the—the Marquis’s daughter?’

“‘My cousin—la nina—Estella de la Zarza.’

“‘A pretty one enough; and she is about to change it, I presume?’

“‘Change it!’ reiterated the Ayudante de Campo, who did not perceive that I was fishing for a certain information. ‘Oh! I see—marriage. She is about to marry, Corpo de Baccho! yes, but our Spanish ladies do not change their names when they marry.’

“‘And who is the happy man—yourself, señor?’

“‘Nay, nay—we Catholics cannot marry our cousins. Next week she is to wed old Don Jose Gonzalez.’

“‘What! that old beer-barrel, the town-major?’

“‘Si, señor,’ replied he, twirling his mustaches, with a doubtful look: while I felt that I was beginning to abhor that town-major immeasurably.

“About eight o’clock next morning I saw sixteen Spanish officers in full uniform, with their swords and belts, preceded by the said Don Jose, marching in file through the court of the palace, at the side-door of which they entered. A few minutes afterwards my friend, the aide-de-camp, came to acquaint me, that “the court-martial, by which I was to be

tried, was constituted, and awaited me.' Without any futile protestation against the illegality and rapidity of this measure, I followed him to a spacious apartment, having four large windows, which opened down to the floor, and overlooked a grass park which lay behind the palace. The members of the court, over which the town-major (who, from the first, had constituted himself my deadly enemy) presided, were solemnly sworn across their swords; they promised to administer justice according to the laws of war, and so forth, and then the prosecution proceeded.

"I was charged with murdering, or causing to be shot, two peasants; robbery, in levying contributions; blasphemous sacrilege, in destroying a statue of the Blessed Virgin. My horizon was now black as it could be! I knew very little of the language. Save Crogan, who remained beside me in court, I had not a friend or a comrade near me; for the whole of my guard had marched for Belem four hours before, while Maurice Quill, and the other sick officers, could neither defend nor succour me. I perceived in a moment, that, as Crogan said, I had been accused of outrages committed by les Chasseurs Britanniques (who wore scarlet uniform); but I resolved, that unless matters went hard with myself, not to criminate their officer, who, by leaving his own proper route, and relaxing his discipline, had become guilty of the acts for which I was that day to suffer. The three principal witnesses against me were, the alcalde, the muleteer, and a farmer from the partida of La Guardia.

"The first—old, stupid, half-blind, and obstinate—swore to my face that I was the officer who had ordered his dear brother Vincentio, the abogado, to be shot on his own threshold, and another man to be bayoneted. In vain I drew his attention to the Highland cap of the 71st, and to my tartan trews, assuring him that I was an Escoto. He shook his head—I wore a red coat—I was the very man!

"Then came the muleteer, a sturdy Catalonian, clad

in a fur jacket and yellow cotton breeches, wearing a broad sombrero, under which his black hair hung in a red net. He, too, swore across his knife, that I had carried off his train of mules, or at least, that at the bayonet's point, my soldiers had done so, to travel more at their ease.

"He did not see me, neither did he then see any waggons of sick, but he knew his mules as well as if he had been the father of them, the moment they appeared in the streets of la Ciudad Real."

"You will swear to your mules, hombre?"

"By the marks in their ears, Don Jose, as readily as I would swear to my own nose."

"Lead forward some of those mules to the window, and let the witness see them."

"An uproar of voices was heard in the park, and the witness, who went to the window, uttered a cry of dismay. The ears of his twenty mules had been shred off close by the bone!"

"Morte de Dios!" growled the officers, twirling their mustaches; "these Inglesos are devils!"

"It was murtherin cruel for the poor bastes," whispered Darby Crogan; "but it was all to save your honour's life I cropped them; and sure it is worth a bushel of mules' ears; for it was a good bushel ov 'em I buried this blessed morning. The Lord reward Mither Quill, for it was his best docthor's knife he lint me, to make croppies of them all."

"The little Major Don Jose was bursting with wrath."

"Call the next witness," he exclaimed, furiously.

"A tall, powerfully-formed, and fair-complexioned man, who, contrary to the Spanish custom, was closely shaven, now came forward, and stated himself to be a farmer, or jardinero, at Mora and La Guardia. He had a large patch on his cheek, and kept one hand constantly thrust into the red and yellow sash which girt his waist."

"Confronting me boldly and vindictively, with all the glare of hate a cold grey eye can pour, he accused

me of destroying for firewood a statue of the Virgin at Mora, and swore to having seen the act committed. A growl of anger followed his evidence ; and I found that shooting an alcalde's brother, and carrying off twenty mules, were mere jokes, compared to this. I was startled by his voice, which, assuredly, I had heard before—but where? What could be the origin of a charge so false, so strange, as sacrilege? I turned to question him, but he was at that moment ordered to withdraw.

“ ‘Señor Ayudante de Campo,’ said Don Jose, ‘read from the *RECOPILACION* of the military penalties the first article.’

“ ‘El que blasfamare el santo nombre de Dios, de la Vergén ó de los Santos, será inmediatamente preso y castigado por la primero vez con la,’ &c.

“ ‘Read the fourth article, concerning outrage to divine images, for the prisoner has been alike sacrilegious and blasphemous.’

“ ‘El que con irreverencia y deliberacion cannocida de desprecio ajare de obra las sagradas imágenes, ornamentos ó cualquiero de las casas dedicados al Divino culto, ó las hurtare, servá ahorcado,’ &c.

“ ‘The plot thickens,’ thought I.

“ ‘In short, they sentenced me to be hanged.

“ ‘The Marquis, as Governor of Ciudad Real, dared to confirm this unjust sentence, which he directed should be put in execution in the Plaza, at eight o'clock on the following morning.

“ ‘Far, far from aid and my comrades ; wholly at the mercy of men, whose hearts the cunning charge of the last witness had totally closed against me ; aware of the futility of denial and defiance, and the hopelessness of rescue or escape, I sat in a grated room of the public carcel, or gaol, of the town, almost stupefied by the suddenness, the shame, and opprobrium of my impending fate. ‘Poets and painters,’ says a certain writer, ‘have ever made the estate of a man condemned to die one of their favourite themes of comment or description.’ By heavens ! I never

met one of either which came within a thousand degrees of the agony I endured that night at Ciudad Real. I, a gentleman, a soldier, bearing on my person three wounds, won on that accursed Spanish soil; innocent of all they alleged; young, with a long life and rapid promotion before me, to be cut off thus—strangled like a garotted villain—hanged like a dog, to glut the noonday frenzy of a Spanish rabble! Horrible! I had often faced death without shrinking; but now, like a coward's, my whole soul shrunk from such a death as that which these Spaniards meted out to me.

“The night came on: I sat in darkness, revolving a myriad futile plans of escape. I was to die to-morrow, and that conviction seemed palpably before me. I heard it, saw it, felt it; there was a dull sound humming in my ears—a tingling in my heart. I recollected, with remorse and shame, how coldly, calmly, and unmoved I had seen the provost-marshal's guard hang six soldiers on the retreat from Burgos. I remembered their struggles, their agonies, and wondered how they felt. I passed a hand over my throat, compressed it a little, and shuddered.

“And now, in the man who had accused me of sacrilege, I suddenly remembered Barba Roxa, the robber, and the hand I had maimed was that which he retained in his sash.

“‘Fool! fool! that I am,’ I exclaimed, bitterly; ‘where were my eyes, my ears, my faculties, that knew him not before? This is his revenge—his Spaniard's triumph.’

“Even my friend, the aide-de-camp, seemed to have abandoned me; and could it be that the pretty daughter of the Marquis had not pleaded, or said one kind word to save the poor officer who had so freely risked his life for hers?

“All at once my stupor left me. I sprang to the bars of the window, and from their solid sockets, madly strove to wrench them with a tiger's strength. I felt every corner; the vast iron lock of the door,

the door itself moveless as a wall of adamant. Vain, vain! I was to die to-morrow, and my swollen heart almost burst with emotion, when I thought of my friends, my family, and my regiment, all canvassing the various causes of a death so ignominious.

"A face appeared suddenly at the window, which was raised.

"Don't be alarmed, yer honour, it's only me,' said a voice.

"Crogan—you!' I exclaimed, in the confusion of my thoughts; 'are you not dead—in heaven?'

"In heaven—the Lord forbid! I'm here, standing on my two feet, not that I think people there stand on their heads; but don't be spakin' in that doleful way, sir, at all, for you must prepare to lave this place in less than no time. Do you hear the knockin' of hammers? It's them thavin' Spaniards puttin' up the dancin' post in the Plaza—blazes take that same!'

"Leave this! Crogan; but how?'

"By the door, to be sure. It will be opened in ten minutes; and horses are waitin' for the three of us, I hope, at the corner of the sthreet.'

"The three of us, Darby?'

"Ay, sir, just the three of us; for isn't there a darlin' young lady goin', too?—but I must be afther lookin' to the girths and straps of our cattle.'

"He was scarcely gone when the door of the room opened, and the daughter of the Marquis stood before me, together with a man bearing a light; and in that man I recognised the under carcelero, or turnkey.

"Oh! señora,' I exclaimed; my heart bounding with gratitude and joy, 'you have not forgotten me—or abandoned me to this cruel and unmerited death.'

"Hush, señor; not a word of thanks or of transport, for that would spoil all,' she replied, with calmness and decision. 'I do, indeed, owe you a debt of gratitude; but the mention of that to my father, and more than all to Don Jose——'

"Ah, you shudder at that name.'

“ ‘Would but accelerate your fate. I have bribed the carcelero,’ she whispered, ‘and he will sleep sound. His deputy is about to join the guerillas of the great Don Julian Sanchez, and for twenty dollars will guide you to Madrid, sent by my cousin, the ayudante; your horses are waiting at the corner of the Plaza. No more,’ she added, shortly, when I attempted to kiss her hand, which the thick folds of her ample veil concealed.

“In a minute we had left the detested prison-house, and crossed the garden which lay between it and the Plaza. Again the glorious moon was rolling in its silver splendour over Ciudad Real; and as I gazed on my fair companion, the interest I felt for her returned vividly, and became stronger, as the moment approached when I should leave her for ever. I saw her magnificent eyes sparkling through her veil.

“ ‘Señora,’ said I, with hesitation, as our attendant, by hurrying on before, had left us for one instant alone—‘Señora,’ I continued, urged by a kind, a grateful, and a stronger impulse than I could at that time analyse, ‘though to remain here is remaining but to die, I leave Ciudad Real with the most sincere sorrow.’

“ ‘And why?’

“ ‘Because I may never see you again.’

“ ‘But I also am going to Madrid—and this night, too.’

“I remembered the words of Crogan; I knew all a Spanish love was capable of; my heart leaped within me.

“ ‘Madrid!’ I reiterated.

“ ‘With you and your brave dragoon. Ah, señor, do not refuse to escort me. My father is bent on marrying me to Don Jose——’

“ ‘What!—that rascally old town-major? My dear señora, I beg you not to think of it.’

“ ‘Ah! I have thought a great deal of it, and wept for it too.’

“ ‘Then,’ said I, drawing my breath more freely,

and seeing a prospect of vengeance on the pot-bellied major, 'you do not love him?'

"'Oh no; I hate, abhor, detest him; and to avoid him, am about to retire to Madrid, where my aunt lives. She is reverend mother at our Lady of Attocha. You know the great convent where the little Jesus is that works the miracles, and looks so beautiful, a love of an infant, on the altar of the Hundred Lamps. My aunt will save me from this detested union if you, señor, will but afford me your escort. I am friendless,' she continued, weeping; 'for such is the terror of my father's name that there is not a man in Ciudad Real whom I can trust. Yet I shall confide in your goodness; indeed I am sure—I know—I think, I may. The British officer has a high sense of chivalry and honour, but Ay de mi! el Espanol no tiene nada.'

"'Madam,' said I, touched to the heart by the compliment, and her confiding nature, 'trust to me, and while life remains, by heaven, and that honour, I will see you safely to Madrid.'

"Crogan, with three saddle-horses, stood at the gate. We mounted, the fair Estella springing on her jennet à la cavalier, in the fashion of Old Castile. We left Ciudad Real by the northern gate, and then put our horses to their mettle, as we avoided the direct route to Madrid, and struck off into the mountains towards Carrion de Calatrava.

"I might spin my story beyond the limits allotted to me, but surely it requires no conjuror to guess the sequel! The interest begun by the miniature, so fortunately found, the charming society, confidence, and generous spirit of the original strengthened and confirmed. In four days we reached Madrid, in four more we were married in the convent chapel of Attocha.

"The Marquis sent the Major Don Jose expressly to Wellington, requesting him to hang and behead me. His grace declined to accede, but the name of Captain —, of Les Chasseurs Britanniques, was

struck out of the army-list. My head is still safe on my shoulders, though somewhat powdered by time. Thanks to his Grace of Richmond, I have got my medal with eight clasps, and La Señora Estella (now known by another name) is, though somewhat old like myself, one of the dearest and most affectionate wives in the world, and I crave a bumper in her honour, gentlemen."

Such was the story of our worthy major, whose toast I need scarcely say was drunk with enthusiasm.

Our doctor was the next, and like every one who has a story to tell he had listened with considerable impatience to the adventures of the major, and the moment his toast had been duly honoured and silence was restored, he began his tale without further preface, and was then followed by our rough old Highland quartermaster.

CHAPTER XXV.

A LEGEND OF FIFE.

I CAN only give you an old Scottish story of the last century, with the incidents of which I became familiar in my student days when attending the ancient university of St. Andrew's, where I worked my way manfully through the classes of chemistry, anatomy, and natural philosophy; and felt as proud of my academic gown as I have done in later years of my red coat and epaulettes, and perhaps as happy, too, for some of the most joyous days, and certainly the most uproarious nights of my past life, have been spent in the auld East Neuk of Fife—God bless it!

And now for my legend.

It was a cold night in the March of the year 1708.¹ The hour of ten had tolled from the old Gothic collegiate church; beating on his drum, the drummer in the livery of the burgh had proceeded from

the Market-cross to the ruins of St. David's Castle, and from thence to the chapel of St. Rufus, and having made one long roll or flourish at the point from whence his peregrination began, he adjourned to the "Thane of Fife" to procure a dram, while the good folks of Crail composed themselves for the night, and the barring of doors and windows announced that those who were within had resolved to make themselves comfortable and secure, while those unfortunate wights that were without were likely to remain so.

Hollowly the German Sea was booming on the rocks of the harbour; and from its hazy surface a cold east wind swept over the flat, bleak coast of Crail; a star peeped at times between the flying clouds, and even the moon looked forth once, but immediately veiled her face again, as if one glance at the iron shore and barren scenery, unenlivened by hedge or tree, were quite enough to prevent her from looking again.

The town-drummer had received his dram and withdrawn, and Master Spiggot, the gudeman or landlord of the Thane of Fife, the principal tavern, and only inn or hostel in the burgh, was taking a last view of the main street, and considering the propriety of closing for the night. It was broad, spacious, and is still overlooked by many a tall and gable-ended mansion, whose antique and massive aspect announces that, like other Fifeshire burghs before the Union in the preceding year, it had seen better days. Indeed, the house then occupied by Master Spiggot himself, and from which his sign bearing the panoplied Thane at full gallop on a caparisoned steed, swung creaking in the night wind, was one of those ancient edifices, and in former days had belonged to the provost of the adjoining kirk; but this was (as Spiggot said), "in the auld-warld times o' the Papistrie."

The gudeman shook his white head solemnly and sadly, as he looked down the empty thoroughfare.

"There was a time," he muttered, and paused.

Silent and desolate as any in the ruins of Thebes, the street was half covered with weeds and rank grass that grew between the stones, and Spiggot could see them waving in the dim starlight.

Crail is an out-of-the-way place. It is without thoroughfare and without trade; few leave it and still fewer think of going there, for there one feels as if on the very verge of society; for even by day, there reigns a monastic gloom, a desertion, a melancholy, an uniform and voiceless silence, broken only by the croak of the gulls and the cawing of the clamorous gulls nestling on the old church tower, while the sea booms incessantly as it rolls on the rocky beach.

But there was a time when it was otherwise; when the hum of commerce rose around its sculptured cross, and there was a daily bustle in the chambers of its Town-hall, for there a portly provost and bailies with a battalion of seventeen corpulent councillors sat solemnly deliberating on the affairs of the burgh, and swelling with a municipal importance that was felt throughout the whole East Neuk of Fife; for, in those days, the bearded Russ and red-haired Dane, the Norwayer and the Hollander, laden with merchandise, furled their sails in that deserted harbour where now scarcely a fisherboat is seen; for on Crail, as on all its sister towns along the coast, fell surely and heavily that decay of trade which succeeded the Union in 1707.

On the sad changes a year had brought about, Spiggot pondered sadly, and was only roused from his dreamy mood by the sudden apparition of a traveller on horseback standing before him; for so long and so soft was the grass of the street that his approach had been unheard by the dreamer, whose mind was wandering after the departed glories of the East Neuk.

"A cold night, landlord, for such I take you to be," said the stranger, in a bold and cheerful voice, as he dismounted.

"A cauld night and a dreary too," sighed poor Boniface, as he bowed, and hastened to seize the stranger's bridle, and buckled it to a ring at the door-cheek; "but the sight of a visitor does gude to my heart; step in, sir. A warm posset that was simmering in the parlour for myself is at your service, and I'll set the stall-boy to corn your beast and stable it."

"I thank you, gudeman; but for unharnessing it matters not, as I must ride onward; but I will take the posset with thanks, for I am chilled to death by my long ride along this misty coast."

Spiggot looked intently at the traveller as he stooped, and entering the low-arched door which was surmounted by an old monastic legend, trod into the bar with a heavy clanking stride, for he was accoutred with jack boots and gilded spurs. His rocquelaure was of scarlet cloth, warmly furred, and the long curls of his Ramilies wig flowed over it. His beaver was looped upon three sides with something of a military air, and one long white feather that adorned it, floated down his back, for the dew was heavy on it. He was a handsome man, about forty years of age, well sunburned, with a keen dark eye, and close-clipped moustache, which indicated that he had served in foreign wars. He threw his hat and long jewelled rapier aside, and on removing his rocquelaure, discovered a white velvet coat more richly covered with lace than any that Spiggot had seen even in the palmiest days of Crail.

According to the fashion of Queen Anne's courtiers, it was without a collar, to display the long white cravat of point d'Espagne, without cuffs, and edged from top to bottom with broad bars of lace, clasps and buttons of silver the whole length; being compressed at the waist by a very ornamental belt, fastened by a large gold buckle.

"Your honour canna think of riding on to-night," urged Boniface; "and if a Crail-capon done just to perfection, and a stoup of the best wine, at least,

siccan wine as we get by the east seas, since that vile incorporating Union——”

“Vile and damnable! say I,” interrupted the stranger.

“True for ye, sir,” said Spiggot, with a kindling eye; “but if these puir viands can induce ye to partake of the hospitality of my puir hostel, that like our gude burrowtown is no just what it has been——”

“Gudeman, ’tis impossible, for I must ride so soon as I have imbibed thy posset.”

“As ye please, sir—your honour’s will be done. Our guests are now, even as the visits of angels, unco few and far between; and thus, when one comes, we are loath to part with him. There is a deep pitfall, and an ugly gulleyhole where the burn crosses the road at the town-head, and if ye miss the path, the rocks by the beach are steep, and in a night like this——”

“Host of mine,” laughed the traveller, “I know right well every rood of the way, and by keeping to the left near the Auldlees may avoid both the blackpit and the sea-beach.”

“Your honour kens the country hereawa, then?” said Spiggot with surprise.

“Of old, perhaps, I knew it as well as thee.”

The gudeman of the Thane scrutinised the traveller’s face keenly, but failed to recognise him, and until this moment, he thought that no man in the East Neuk was unknown to him; but here his inspection was at fault.

“And hast thou no visitors with thee now, friend host?” he asked of Spiggot.

“One only, gude sir, who came here on a brown horse about nightfall. He is an unco’ foreign-looking man, but has been asking the way to the castle o’ Balcomie.”

“Ha! and thou didst tell of this plaguey pitfall, I warrant.”

“Assuredly, your honour, in kindness I did but hint of it.”

"And thereupon he stayed. Balcomie—indeed! and what manner of man is he?"

"By the corslet which he wears under his coat and the jaunty cock of his beaver, I would say he had been a soldier."

"Good again—give him my most humble commendations, and ask him to share thy boasted possession of wine with me."

"What name did you say, sir?"

"Thou inquisitive varlet, I said no name," replied the gentleman, with a smile. "In these times men do not lightly give their names to each other, when the land is swarming with Jacobite plotters and government spies, disguised Jesuits, and Presbyterian tyrants. I may be the Devil or the Pope, for all thou knowest."

"Might ye no be the Pretender?" said Spiggot with a sour smile.

"Nay, I have a better travelling name than that but say to this gentleman that the Major of Marshal Orkney's Dragoons requests the pleasure of sharing a stoup of wine with him."

"Sir, it mattereth little whether ye give your name or no," replied the host bitterly; "for we are a' nameless now. Twelve months ago, we were true Scottish men, but now——"

"Our king is an exile—our crown is buried forever, and our brave soldiers are banished to far and foreign wars, while the grass is growing green in the streets of our capital—ay, green as it is at this hour in your burgh of Crail; but, hence to the stranger yet say not," added the traveller, bitterly and proudly "that in his warmth the Scottish cavalier has betrayed himself."

While the speaker amused himself with examining a printed proclamation concerning the "Tiend Commissioners and Transplantation off Paroch Kirkis," which was pasted over the stone mantelpiece of the bar, the landlord returned with the foreign gentleman's thanks, and an invitation to his chamber,

whither the Major immediately repaired; following the host up a narrow stone spiral stair to a snugly-wainscotted room, against the well-grated windows of which a sudden shower was now beginning to patter.

The foreigner, who was supping on a Crail-capon (in other words a broiled haddock) and stoup of Bourdeaux wine, arose at their entrance, and bowed with an air that was undisguisedly continental. He was a man above six feet, with a long straight nose, over which his dark eyebrows met and formed one unbroken line. He wore a suit of green Genoese velvet, so richly laced that little of the cloth was visible; a full-bottomed wig, and a small corslet of the brightest steel (over which hung the ends of his cravat), as well as a pair of silver-mounted cavalry pistols that lay on the table, together with his unmistakable bearing, decided the Major of Orkney's that the stranger was a brother of the sword.

"Fair sir, little introduction is necessary between us, as, I believe, we have both followed the drum in our time," said the Major, shaking the curls of his Ramilies wig with the air of a man who has decided on what he says.

"I have served, Monsieur," replied the foreigner, "under Marlborough and Eugene."

"Ah! in French Flanders? Landlord—gudeman, harkee; a double stoup of this wine; I have found a comrade to-night—be quick and put my horse to stall, I will not ride hence for an hour or so. What regiment, sir?"

"I was first under Grouvestein in the Horse of Driesberg."

"Then you were on the left of the second column at Ramilies—on that glorious 12th of May," said the Major, drawing the high-backed chair which the host handed him, and spreading out his legs before the fire, which burned merrily in the basket grate on the hearth, "and latterly——"

"Under Wandenberg."

"Ah! an old tyrannical dog."

A dark cloud gathered on the stranger's lofty brow.

"I belonged to the Earl of Orkney's Grey Dragoons," said the Major; "and remember old Wandenberg making a bold charge in that brilliant on-fall when we passed the lines of Monsieur le Mareschal Villars at Pont-a-Vendin, and pushed on to the plains of Lens."

"That was before we invested Doway and Fort-Escharpe, where old Albergotti so ably commanded ten thousand well-beaten soldiers."

"And then Villars drew off from his position at sunset and encamped on the plain before Arras."

"Thou forgettest, comrade, that previously he took up a position in rear of Escharpe."

"True; but now I am right into the very *melée* of those old affairs, and the mind carries one on like a rocket. Your health, sir—by the way, I am still ignorant of your name."

"I have such very particular reasons for concealing it in this neighbourhood, that——"

"Do not think me inquisitive; in these times men should not pry too closely."

"Monsieur will pardon me, I hope."

"No apology is necessary, save from myself, for now my curiosity is thoroughly and most impertinently whetted, to find a Frenchman in this part of the world, here in this out-o'-the-way place, where no one comes to, and no one goes from, on a bleak promontory of the German Sea, the East Neuk of Fife."

"Monsieur will again excuse me; but I have most particular business with a gentleman in this neighbourhood; and having travelled all the way from Paris, expressly to have it settled, I beg that I may be excused the pain of prevarication. The circumstance of my having served under the great Duke of Marlborough against my own king and countrymen is sufficiently explained when I acquaint you, that I was

then a French Protestant refugee ; but now, without changing my religion, I have King Louis' gracious pardon and kind protection extended to me."

"And so you were with Wandenberg when his troopers made that daring onfall at Pont-a-Vendin, and drove back the horse picquets of Villars," said the Major, to lead the conversation from a point which evidently seemed unpleasant to the stranger. "T was sharp, short, and decisive, as all cavalry affairs should be. You will of course remember that unpleasant affair of Wandenberg's troopers who were accused of permitting a French prisoner to escape. It caused a great excitement in the British camp, where some condemned the dragoons, others Van Wandenberg, and not a few our great Marlborough himself."

"I did hear something of it," said the stranger in a low voice.

"The prisoner whose escape was permitted was, I believe, the father of the youths who captured him, a circumstance which might at least have won them mercy——"

"From the Baron !"

"I forgot me ; he was indeed merciless."

"But as I left his dragoons, and indeed the army about that time, I shall be glad to hear your account of the affair."

"It is a very unpleasant story ; the more so as I was somewhat concerned in it myself," said the Major, slowly filling his long-stemmed glass, and watching the white worm in its stalk, so intently as he recalled all the circumstances he was about to relate, that he did not observe the face of the French gentleman, which was pale as death ; and after a short pause, he began as follows :—

"In the onfall at Pont-a-Vendin, it happened that two young Frenchmen who served as gentlemen volunteers with you in the dragoon regiment of Van Wandenberg, had permitted—how, or why, I pretend not to say—the escape of a certain prisoner of dis-

inction. Some said he was no other than M. le Mareschal Villars himself. They claimed a court-martial, but the old baron, who was a savage-hearted Dutchman, insisted that they should be given up unconditionally to his own mercy, and in an evil moment of heedlessness or haste, Marlborough consented, and sent me (I was his aide-de-camp) with a written order to that effect, addressed to Colonel the Baron Van Wandenberg, whose regiment of horse I met 'en route' for St. Venant, about nightfall on a cold and snowy evening in the month of November.

"Snow covered the whole country, which was all a dead level, and a cold, leaden-coloured sky met the white horizon in one unbroken line, save where the leafless poplars of some far-off village stood up, the landmarks of the plain. In broad flakes the snow fell fast, and directing their march by a distant spire, the Dutch troopers rode slowly over the deepening fields. They were all muffled in dark blue cloaks, on the capes of which the snow was freezing, while the breath of the men and horses curled like steam in the thickening and darkening air.

"Muffled to the nose in a well-furred rocquelaure, with my wig tied to keep the snow from its curls, and my hat flapped over my face, I rode as fast as the deep snow would permit, and passing the rear of the column where, moody and disarmed, the two poor French volunteers were riding under care of an escort I spurred to the baron who rode in front near the kettle drums, and delivered my order; as I did so, recalling with sadness the anxious and wistful glance given me by the prisoners as I passed them.

"Wandenberg, who had no more shape than a huge hogshead, received the dispatch with a growl of satisfaction. He would have bowed, but his neck was too short. I cannot but laugh when I remember his strange aspect. In form he looked nearly as broad as he was long, being nearly eight feet in girth, and completely enveloped in a rough blue rocquelaure, which imparted to his figure the roundness of a ball.

His face, reddened by skiedam and the frost, was glowing like crimson, while the broad beaver hat that overshadowed it, and the feathers with which the beaver was edged, were encrusted with the snow that was rapidly forming a pyramid on its crown, imparting to his whole aspect a drollery at which I could have laughed heartily, had not his well-known acuteness and ferocity awed me into a becoming gravity of demeanour; and delivering my dispatch with a tolerably good grace, I reined back my horse to await any reply he might be pleased to send the Duke.

"His dull Dutch eyes glared with sudden anger and triumph, as he folded the document, and surveyed the manacled prisoners. Thereafter he seized his speaking trumpet, and thundered out,—

"'Ruyters—halt! form open column of troops, trot!'

"It was done as rapidly as heavily-armed Dutchmen on fat slow horses knee deep among snow could perform it, and then wheeling them into line, he gave the orders—

"'Forward the flanks, form circle, sling musketoons! trumpeters ride to the centre and dismount.'

"By these unexpected manœuvres, I suddenly found myself inclosed in a hollow circle of the Dutch horsemen, and thus, as it were, compelled to become a spectator of the scene that ensued, though I had his Grace of Marlborough's urgent orders to rejoin him without delay on the road to Aire."

"And—and you saw——"

"Such a specimen of discipline as neither the devil nor De Martinet ever dreamed of; but thoroughly Dutch, I warrant you.

"I have said it was intensely cold, and that the night was closing; but the whiteness of the snow that covered the vast plain, with the broad red circle of the half-observed moon that glimmered through the fast-falling flakes, as it rose behind a distant spire, cast a dim light upon the place where the Dutchmen halted. But deeming that insufficient, Van Wanden-

berg ordered half-a-dozen torches to be lighted, for his troopers always had such things with them, being useful by night for various purposes; and hissing and sputtering in the falling snow flakes, their lurid and fitful glare was thrown on the close array of the Dutch dragoons, on their great cumbersome hats, on the steeple crowns of which, I have said, the snow was gathering in cones, and the pale features of the two prisoners, altogether imparting a wild, unearthly, and terrible effect to the scene about to be enacted on that wide and desolate moor.

“By order of Van Wandenberg, three halberts were fixed into the frozen earth, with their points bound together by a thong, after which the dismounted trumpeters layed hands on one of the young Frenchmen, whom they proceeded to strip of his coat and vest.

“Disarmed and surrounded, aware of the utter futility of resistance, the unfortunate volunteer offered none, but gazed wistfully and imploringly at me, and sure I am, that in my lowering brow and kindling eyes, he must have seen the storm that was gathering in my heart.

“‘Dieu vous bénisse, Officier,’ cried the Frenchman in a mournful voice, while shuddering with cold and horror as he was stripped to his shirt; ‘save me from this foul disgrace, and my prayers—yea, my life—shall be for ever at your disposal.’

“‘Good comrade,’ said I, ‘entreat me not, for here I am powerless.’

“‘Baron,’ he exclaimed; ‘I am a gentleman—a gentleman of old France, and I dare thee to lay thy damnable scourge upon me.’

“‘Ach Gott; dare—do you say dare? ve vill zee,’ laughed Van Wandenberg, as the prisoner was dragged forward and about to be forcibly trussed to the halberts by the trumpeters, when, animated to the very verge of insanity, he suddenly freed himself, and rushing like a madman upon the Baron, struck him from his horse by one blow of his clenched hand.

The horse snorted, the Dutch troopers opened their saucer eyes wider still, as the great and corpulent mass fell heavily among the deepening snow, and in an instant the foot of the Frenchman was pressed upon his throat, while he exclaimed—

“ ‘If I slay thee, thou hireling dog, as I have often slain thy clodpated countryman in other days,’ and the Frenchman laughed fiercely, ‘by St. Denis! I shall have one foeman less on this side of Hell.’

“ ‘Gott in Himmel! ach! mein tuyvel! mein Gott!’ gasped the Dutchman, as he floundered beneath the heel of the vengeful and infuriated Frenchman, who was determined on destroying him, till a blow from the baton of an officer stretched him almost senseless among the snow, where he was immediately grasped by the trumpeters, disrobed of his last remaining garment, and bound strongly to the halberts.

“ Meanwhile the other prisoner had been pinioned and resolutely held by his escort, otherwise he would undoubtedly have fallen also upon Van Wandenberg, who, choking with a tempest of passion that was too great to find utterance in words, had gathered up his rotund figure, and with an agility wonderful in a man of his years and vast obesity, so heavily armed, in a buff coat and jack boots ribbed with iron, a heavy sword and cloak, clambered on the back of his horse, as a clown would climb up a wall; and with a visage alternating between purple and blue, by the effects of rage and strangulation, he surveyed the prisoner for a moment in silence, and there gleamed in his piggish grey eyes an expression of fury and pain, bitterness and triumph combined, and he was only able to articulate one word—

“ ‘Flog!’

“ On the handsome young Frenchman’s dark curly hair, glistening with the whitening snow that fell upon it, and on his tender skin reddening in the frosty atmosphere, on the swelling muscles of his athletic form, on a half-healed sabre-wound, and on

the lineaments of a face that then expressed the extremity of mental agony, fell full the wavering light of the uplifted torches. The Dutch, accustomed to every species of extra-judicial cruelty by sea and land, looked on with the most grave stolidity and apathetic indifference; while I felt an astonishment and indignation that rapidly gave place to undisguised horror.

“Flog!”

“The other prisoner uttered a groan that seemed to come from his very heart, and then covered his ears and eyes with his hands. Wielded by a muscular trumpeter, an immense scourge of many-knotted cords was brought down with one fell sweep on the white back of the victim, and nine livid bars, each red, as if seared by a hot iron, rose under the infliction, and again the terrible instrument was reared by the trumpeter at the full stretch of his sinewy arm

“Monsieur will be aware, that until the late Revolution of 1688, this kind of punishment was unknown here and elsewhere, save in Holland; and though I have seen soldiers run the gauntlet, ride the mare, and beaten by the martinets, I shall never, oh, no! never forget the sensation of horror with which this (to me) new punishment of the poor Frenchman inspired me; and, sure I am, that our great Duke of Marlborough could in no way have anticipated it.

“Accustomed, as I have said, to every kind of cruel severity, unmoved and stoically the Dutch looked on, with their grey, lacklustre eyes, dull, unmeaning, and passionless in their stolidity, contrasting strongly with the expression of startled horror depicted in the strained eyeballs and bent brows of the victim's brother, when after a time he dared to look on this revolting punishment. Save an ill-repressed sob, or half-muttered interjection from the suffering man, no other sound broke the stillness of the place, where a thousand horsemen stood in close order, but the sputtering of the torches, in the red light of which

our breaths were ascending like steam. Yes! there was one other sound, and it was a horrible one—the monotonous whiz of the scourge, as it cut the keen frosty air and descended on the lacerated back of the fainting prisoner. Sir, I see that my story disturbs you.

“A corpulent Provost Mareschal, with a pair of enormous moustaches, amid which the mouth of his meerscham was inserted, stood by, smoking with admirable coolness, and marking the time with his cane, while a drummer tapped on his kettledrum, and four trumpeters had, each in succession, given their twenty-five lashes and withdrawn; twice had the knotted scourge been coagulated with blood, and twice had it been washed in the snow which now rose high around the feet of our champing and impatient horses; and now the fifth torturer approached, but still the compressed lips and clammy tongue of the proud Frenchman refused to implore mercy. His head was bowed down on his breast, his body hung pendant from the cords that encircled his swollen and livid wrists; his back from neck to waist was one mass of lacerated flesh, on which the feathery snowflakes were melting; for the agony he endured must have been like unto a stream of molten lead pouring over him; but no groan, no entreaty escaped him, and still the barbarous punishment proceeded.

“I have remarked that there is no event too horrible or too sad to be without a little of the ridiculous in it, and this was discernible here.

“One trumpeter, who appeared to have more humanity, or perhaps less skill than his predecessors, and did not exert himself sufficiently, was soundly beaten by the rattan of the trumpet-major, while the latter was castigated by the Provost Mareschal, who, in turn for remissness of duty, received sundry blows from the speaking-trumpet of the Baron; so they were all laying soundly on each other for a time.”

“Morbleu!” said the Frenchman, with a grim smile, “it was quite in the Dutch taste, that”

"The Provost Mareschal continued to mark the time with the listless apathy of an automaton; the smoke curled from his meerscham, the drum continued to tap-tap-tap, until it seemed to sound like thunder to my strained ears, for every sense was painfully excited. All count had long been lost, but when several hundred lashes had been given, Van Wandenbergh and half his Dutchmen were asleep in their saddles.

"It was now snowing thick and fast, but still this hideous dream continued, and still the scourging went on.

"At last the altered sound of the lash and the terrible aspect of the victim, who, after giving one or two convulsive shudders, threw back his head with glazed eyes and jaw relaxed, caused the trumpeter to recede a pace or two, and throw down his gory scourge, for some lingering sentiment of humanity, which even the Dutch discipline of King William had not extinguished, made him respect when dead the man whom he had dishonoured when alive.

"The young Frenchman was dead!

"An exclamation of disgust and indignation that escaped me woke up the Baron, who after drinking deeply from a great pewter flask of skiedam that hung at his saddlebow, muttered "schelms" several times, rubbed his eyes, and then bellowed through his trumpet to bind up the other prisoner. Human endurance could stand this no more, and though I deemed the offer vain, I proposed to give a hundred English guineas as ransom.

"'Ach Gott!' said the greedy Hollander immediately becoming interested; 'but vere you get zo mosh guilders?'

"'Oh, readily, Mynheer Baron.' I replied, drawing forth my pocket-book, 'I have here bills on his Grace the Duke of Marlborough's paymaster and on the Bank of Amsterdam for much more than that.'

"'Bot I cannot led off de brisoner for zo little—hunder ponds—dat ver small—zay two.'

“‘If one is not enough, Mynheer Baron, I will refer to the decision of his grace the captain-general.’

“‘Ach, der tuyvel! vill you?’ said the Dutchman, with a savage gleam in his little eyes which showed that he quite understood my hint, ‘vell, me vont quarrel vid you; gib me de bills and de schelm is yours.’

“Resolving, nevertheless, to lay the whole affair before Marlborough, the moment I reached our trenches at Aire, I gave a bill for the required sum, and approaching the other Frenchman requested him to remain beside me; but he seemed too much confused by grief, and cold, and horror to comprehend what I said. Poor fellow! his whole soul and sympathies seemed absorbed in the mangled corpse of his brother, which was now unbound from the halberts and lay half sunk among the new-fallen snow. While he stooped over it, and hastily, but tenderly, proceeded to draw the half-frozen clothing upon the stiffened form, the orders of Van Wandenberg were heard hoarsely through his speaking-trumpet, as they rang over the desolate plain, and his troopers wheeled back from a circle into line—from line into open column of troops, and thereafter the torches were extinguished and the march begun. Slowly and solemnly the dragoons glided away into the darkness, each with a pyramid of snow rising from the steeple crown and ample brims of his broad beaver hat.

“It was now almost midnight; the red moon had waned, the snow-storm was increasing, and there were I and the young Frenchman, with his brother's corpse, left together on the wide plain, without a place to shelter us.”

“Proceed, Monsieur,” said the Frenchman, as the narrator paused; “for I am well aware that your story ends not there.”

“It does not—you seem interested; but I have little more to relate, save that I dismounted and assisted the poor Frenchman to raise the body from the snow, and to tie it across the saddle of my horse;

taking the bridle in one hand, I supported him with the other, and thus we proceeded to the nearest town."

"To Armentieres on the Lys," exclaimed the Frenchman, seizing the hands of the Major as the latter paused again; "to Armentieres, ten miles west of Lisle, and there you left them, after adding to your generosity by bestowing sufficient to inter his brother in the Protestant church of that town, and to convey himself to his native France. Oh! Monsieur, I am that Frenchman, and here, from my heart, from my soul, I thank you," and half kneeling, the stranger kissed the hand of the Major.

"You!" exclaimed the latter; "by Jove I am right glad to see you. Here at Crail, too, in the East Neuk o' Fife—'t is a strange chance; and what in heaven's name seek ye here? 'T is a perilous time for a foreigner—still more, a Frenchman, to tread on Scottish ground. The war, the intrigues with St. Germans, the Popish plots, and the devil only knows what more, make travelling here more than a little dangerous."

"Monsieur, I know all that; the days are changed since the Scot was at home in France, and the Frenchman at home in Scotland, for so the old laws of Stuart and Bourbon made them. A few words will tell who I am, and what I seek here. Excuse my reluctance to reveal myself before, for now you have a claim upon me. Oh! believe me, I knew not that I addressed the generous chevalier who, in that hour of despair, redeemed my life (and more than my life), my honour, from the scourge, and enabled me to lay the head of my poor brother with reverence in the grave. You have heard of M. Henri Lemer cier?"

"What! the great swordsman and fencer—that noble master of the science of defence, with the fame of whose skill and valour all Europe is ringing?"

"I am he of whom Monsieur is pleased to speak so highly."

"Your hand again, sir; zounds; but I dearly love this gallant science myself, and have even won me a

little name as a handler of the rapier. There is but one man whom Europe calls your equal, Monsieur Lemer cier."

"My superior, you mean, for I have many equals," replied the Frenchman, modestly. "You, doubtless, mean ——"

"Sir William Hope, of Hopetoun."

"Ah! Mon Dieu, yes, he has indeed a great name in Europe as a fencer and master of arms, either with double or single falcion, case of falcions, back-sword and dagger, pistol or quarter staff; and it is the fame of his skill and prowess in these weapons, and the reputation he has earned by his books on fencing, that hath brought me to-day to this remote part of Scotland."

"Zounds!" said the Major, shaking back the long powdered curls of his Ramilies wig, and looking remarkably grave; "you cannot mean to have a bout with Sir William. He hath a sure hand and a steady eye; I would rather stand a platoon than be once covered by his pistol."

"Monsieur, I have no enmity to this Sir William Hope, nor am I envious of his great name as a fencer. Ma foi! the world is quite wide enough for us both; but here lies my secret. I love Made-moiselle Athalie, the niece of Madame de Livry ——"

"How—the old flame of the great Louis!"

"Oui," said Lemer cier, smiling; "and many say that Athalie bears a somewhat suspicious resemblance to her aunt's royal lover; but that is no business of mine; she loves me very dearly, and is very good and amiable. Diable! I am well content to take her and her thirty thousand louis-d'or without making any troublesome inquiries. It would seem that my dear little Athalie is immensely vain of my reputation as a master of fence, and having heard that this Scottish Chevalier is esteemed the first man of the sword in Britain, and further, that report asserts he slew her brother in the line of battle at Blenheim, fighting bravely for a standard, she declared that ere her hand

was mine, I must measure swords with this Sir William, and dip this, her handkerchief, in his blood in token of his defeat, and of my conquest."

"A very pretty idea of Mademoiselle Athalie, and I doubt not Hopetoun will be overwhelmed by the obligation when he hears of it," said the Major of Orkney's, whose face brightened with a broad laugh; "and so much would I love to see two such brisk fellows as thou and he yoked together, at cut-and-thrust, that if permitted, I will rejoice in bearing the message of M. Lemercier to Sir William, whose Castle of Balcomie is close by here."

"Having no friend with me, I accept your offer with a thousand thanks," said Lemercier.

"Sir William did indeed slay an officer, as you have said, in that charge at Blenheim, where the regiment of the Marquis de Livry were cut to pieces by Orkney's Scots' Greys; but to be so good and amiable, and to love you so much withal, Mademoiselle Athalie must be a brisk dame to urge her favoured Chevalier on a venture so desperate; for mark me, Monsieur Lemercier," said the Major, impressively, "none can know better than I the skill—the long and carefully-studied skill—of Sir William of Hopetoun, and permit me to warn you ——"

"It matters not—I must fight him; love, honour, and rivalry, too, if you will have it so, all spur me on, and no time must be lost."

"Enough: I should have been in my stirrups an hour ago; and dark though the night be, I will ride to Balcomie with your message."

"A million of thanks—you will choose time and place for me."

"Say, to-morrow, at sunrise; be thou at the Standing-stone of Sauchope; 't is a tall, rough block, in the fields near the Castle of Balcomie, and doubt not but Sir William will meet thee there."

"Thanks, thanks," again said the Frenchman, pressing the hand of the Major, who, apparently delighted at the prospect of witnessing such an en-

counter between the two most renowned swordsmen in Europe, drank off his stoup of wine, muffled himself in his rocquelaure, and with his little cocked hat stuck jauntily on one side of the Ramilies wig, left the apartment, and demanded his horse and the reckoning.

"Then your honour will be fulehardy, and tempt Providence," said the landlord.

"Nay, gudeman, but you cannot tempt me to stay just now. I ride only through the town to Balcomie, and will return anon. The Hopetoun family are there, I believe?"

"Yes; but saving my lady at the preachings, we see little o' them; for Sir William has bidden at Edinburgh, or elsewhere, since his English gold coft the auld tower from the Balcomies of that ilk, the year before the weary Union, devil mend it!"

"Amen, say I; and what callest thou English gold?"

"The doolfu' compensation, o whilk men say he had his share."

"Man, thou liest, and they who say so lie! for to the last moment his voice was raised against that traitorous measure of Queensbury and Stair, and now every energy of his soul is bent to its undoing!" replied the Major, fiercely, as he put spurs to his horse, and rode rapidly down the dark and then grassy street, at the end of which the clank of his horse's hoofs died away, as he diverged upon the open ground that lay northward of the town, and by which he had to approach the tower of Balcomie.

The Frenchman remained long buried in thought, and as he sipped his wine, gazed dreamily on the changing embers that glowed on the hearth, and cast a warm light on the blue delft lining of the fireplace. The reminiscences of the war in Flanders had called up many a sad and many a bitter recollection.

"I would rather," thought he, "that the man I am to encounter to-morrow was not a Scot, for the kindness of to-night, and of that terrible night in the snow-clad plain of Arras, inspire me with a warm love for all the people of this land. But my promise must

be redeemed, my adventure achieved, or thou, my dear, my rash Athalie, art lost to me ! " and he paused to gaze with earnestness upon a jewel that glittered on his hand. It was a hair ring, bound with gold, and a little shield bearing initials, clasped the small brown tress that was so ingeniously woven round it.

As he gazed on the trinket, his full dark eyes brightened for a moment, as the mild memories of love and fondness rose in his heart, and a bright smile played upon his haughty lip and lofty brow. Other thoughts arose, and the eyebrows that almost met over the straight Grecian nose of Lemercier, were knit as he recalled the ominous words of his recent acquaintance—

"Mademoiselle Athalie must be a brisk dame to urge her favoured Chevalier on a venture so desperate."

One bitter pang shot through his heart, but he thrust the thought aside, and pressed the ring to his lips.

"Oh, Athalie," he said, in a low voice, "I were worse than a villain to suspect thee."

At that moment midnight tolled from the dull old bell of Crail, and the strangeness of the sound brought keenly home to the lonely heart of Lemercier that he was in a foreign land.

The hour passed, but the Major did not return.

Morning came.

With gray dawn Lemercier was awake, and a few minutes found him dressed and ready. He attired himself with particular care, putting on a coat and vest, the embroidery of which presented as few conspicuous marks as possible to an antagonist's eye. He clasped his coat from the cravat to the waist, and compressed his embroidered belt. He adjusted his white silk roll-up stockings with great exactness; tied up the flowing curls of his wig with a white ribbon, placed a scarlet feather in his hat, and then took his sword. The edge and point of the blade, the shell and pommel, grasp and guard of the hilt were all examined with scrupulous care for the last time ;

he drew on his gloves with care, and giving to the landlord the reckoning, which he might never return to pay, Lemer cier called for his horse and rode through the main street of Crail.

Following the directions he had received from his host, he hastily quitted the deserted and grass-grown street of the burgh (the very aspect of which he feared would chill him), and proceeded towards the ancient obelisk, still known as the "Standing Stone of Sauchope," which had been named as the place of rendezvous by that messenger who had not returned, and against whom M. Lemer cier felt his anger a little excited.

It was a cool March morning, the sky was clear and blue, and the few silver clouds that floated through it became edged with gold as the sun rose from his bed in the eastern sea—that burnished sea from which the cool fresh breeze swept over the level coast. The fields were assuming a vernal greenness, the buds were swelling on hedge and tree, and the vegetation of the summer that was to come—the summer that Lemer cier might never see—was springing from amid the brown remains of the autumn that had gone, an autumn that he had passed with Athalie amid the gaities and gardens of Paris and Versailles.

At the distance of a mile he saw the strong square tower of Balcomie, the residence of his antagonist. One side was involved in shadow, the other shone redly in the rising sun, and the morning smoke from its broad chimneys curled in dusky columns into the blue sky. The caw of the rooks that followed the plough, whose shining share turned up the aromatic soil, the merry whistle of the bonneted plough-boys, the voices of the blackbird and the mavis, made him sad, and pleased was Lemer cier to leave behind him all such sounds of life, and reach the wild and solitary place where the obelisk stood—a grim and time-worn relic of the Druid ages or the Danish wars. A rough mis-shapen remnant of antiquity, it still remains to mark the scene of this hostile meeting, which yet

forms one of the most famous traditions of the East Neuk.

As Lemer cier rode up, he perceived a gentleman standing near the stone. His back was towards him, and he was apparently intent on caressing his charger, whose reins he had thrown negligently over his arm.

Lemer cier thought he recognised the hat, edged with white feathers, the full-bottomed wig, and the peculiar lacing of the white velvet coat, and on the stranger turning he immediately knew his friend of the preceding night.

"Bon jour, my dear sir," said Lemer cier

"A good morning," replied the other, and they politely raised their little cocked hats.

"I had some misgivings when monsieur did not return to me," said the Frenchman. "Sir William has accepted my challenge?"

"Yes, monsieur, and is now before you," replied the other, springing on horseback. "I am Sir William Hope, or Hope-toun, and am here at your service."

"You!" exclaimed the Frenchman, in tones of blended astonishment and grief. "Ah! unsay what you have said. I cannot point my sword against the breast of my best benefactor—against him to whom I owe both honour and life. Can I forget that night on the plains of Arras? Ah, my God! what a mistake: what a misfortune. Ah, Athalie! to what have you so unthinkingly urged me?"

"Think of her only, and forget all of me, save that I am your antagonist, your enemy, as I stand between thee and her. Come on, M. Lemer cier, do not forget your promise to mademoiselle; we will sheathe our swords on the first blood drawn."

"So be it then, if the first is thine," and unsheathing their long and keen-edged rapiers, they put spurs to their horses, and closing up hand to hand, engaged with admirable skill and address.

The skill of one swordsman seemed equalled only by that of the other.

Lemer cier was the first fencer at the Court of

France, where fencing was an accomplishment known to all, and there was no man in Britain equal to Sir William Hope, whose "Complete Fencing Master" was long famous among the lovers of the noble science of defence.

They rode round each other in circles. Warily and sternly they began to watch each other's eyes, till they flashed in unison with their blades; their hearts beat quicker as their passions became excited and their rivalry roused; and their nerves became strung as the hope of conquest was whetted. The wish of merely being wounded ended in a desire to wound; and the desire to wound in a clamorous anxiety to vanquish and destroy. Save the incessant clash of the notched rapiers, as each deadly thrust was adroitly parried and furiously repeated, the straining of stirrup-leathers, as each fencer swayed to and fro in his saddle, their suppressed breathing, and the champing of iron bits, Lemercier and his foe saw nothing but the gleam, and heard nothing but the clash of each other's glittering swords.

The sun came up in his glory from the shining ocean; the mavis soared above them in the blue sky; the early flowers of spring were unfolding their dewy cups to the growing warmth, but still man fought with man, and the hatred in their hearts waxed fierce and strong.

In many places their richly-laced coats were cut and torn. One lost his hat, and had received a severe scar on the forehead, and the other had one on his bridle hand. They often paused breathlessly, and in weariness lowered the points of their weapons to glare upon each other with a ferocity that could have no end but death—until at the sixth encounter, when Lemercier became exhausted, and failing to parry with sufficient force a fierce and furious thrust, was run through the breast so near the heart, that he fell from his horse gasping and weltering in blood.

Sir William Hope flung away his rapier and sprang to his assistance, but the unfortunate Frenchman could only draw from his finger the ring of Athalie,

and with her name on his lips expired—being actually choked in his own blood.

Such was the account of this combat given by the horrified Master Spiggot, who, suspecting “that there was something wrong,” had followed his guest to the scene of the encounter, the memory of which is still preserved in the noble house of Hopetoun, and the legends of the burghers of Crail.

So died Lemer cier.

Of what Sir William said or thought on the occasion, we have no record. In the good old times he would have eased his conscience by the endowment of an altar, or foundation of a yearly mass; but in the year 1708 such things had long been a dead letter in the East Neuk; and so in lieu thereof, he interred him honourably in the aisle of the ancient kirk, where a marble tablet long marked the place of his repose.

Sir William did more; he carefully transmitted the ring of Lemer cier to the bereaved Athalie, but before its arrival in Paris she had dried her tears for the poor chevalier, and wedded one of his numerous rivals. Thus, she forgot him sooner than his conqueror, who reached a good old age, and died at his castle of Balcomie, with his last breath regretting the combat of that morning at the Standing Stone of Sauchope.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PHANTOM REGIMENT—THE QUARTERMASTER’S STORY.

THOUGH the continued march of intellect and education have nearly obliterated from the mind of the Scots a belief in the marvellous, still a love of the supernatural lingers among the more mountainous districts of the northern kingdom; for “the School-master” finds it no easy task, even when aided by all the light of science, to uproot the prejudices of more than two thousand years.

I was born in Strathnairn, about the year 1802, and,

on the death of my mother, was given, when an infant, to the wife of a cotter to nurse. With these good people I remained for some years, and thus became cognizant of the facts I am about to relate.

There was a little romance connected with my old nurse Meinie and her gudeman.

In their younger days they had been lovers—lovers as a boy and girl—but were separated by poverty, and then Ewen Mac Ewen enlisted as a soldier, in the 26th or Cameronian Regiment, with which he saw some sharp service in the West Indies and America. The light-hearted young highlander became, in time, a grave, stern, and morose soldier, with the most rigid ideas of religious deportment and propriety: for this distinguished Scottish regiment was of Puritan origin, being one of those raised among the Westland Covenanters, after the deposition of king James VII. by the Estates of Scotland. England surrendered to William of Orange without striking a blow; but the defence of Dunkeld, and the victorious battle of Killycrankie, ended the northern campaign, in which the noble Dundee was slain, and the army of the cavaliers dispersed. The Cameronian Regiment introduced their sectarian forms, their rigorous discipline, and plain mode of public worship into their own ranks, and so strict was their code of morals, that even the Non-jurors and Jacobins admitted the excellence and stern propriety of their bearing. They left the Scottish Service for the British, at the Union, in 1707, but still wear on their appointments the five-pointed star, which was the armorial bearing of the colonel who embodied them; and, moreover, retain the privilege of supplying their own regimental Bibles.

After many years of hard fighting in the old 26th, and after carrying a halbert in the kilted regiment of the Isles, Ewen Mac Ewen returned home to his native place, the great plain of Moray, a graver, and, in bearing, a sadder man than when he left it.

His first inquiry was for Meinie.

She had married a rival of his, twenty years ago.

"God's will be done," sighed Ewen, as he lifted his bonnet, and looked upwards.

He built himself a little cottage, in the old high-land fashion, in his native strath, at a sunny spot, where the Uisc Nairn—the Water of Alders—flowed in front, and a wooded hill arose behind. He hung his knapsack above the fireplace; deposited his old and sorely thumbed regimental Bible (with the Cameronian star on its boards,) and the tin case containing his colonel's letter recommending him to the minister, and the discharge, which gave sixpence per diem as the reward of sixteen battles—all on the shelf of the little window, which contained three panes of glass, with a yoke in the centre of each, and there he settled himself down in peace, to plant his own kail, knit his own hose, and to make his own kilts, a grave and thoughtful but contented old fellow, awaiting the time, as he said, "when the Lord would call him away."

Now it chanced that a poor widow, with several children, built herself a little thatched house on the opposite side of the drove road—an old Fingalian path—which ascended the pastoral glen; and the ready-handed veteran lent his aid to thatch it, and to sling her kail-pot on the cruicks, and was wont thereafter to drop in of an evening to smoke his pipe, to tell old stories of the storming of Ticonderago, and to ask her little ones the catechism and biblical questions. Within a week or so, he discovered that the widow was Meinie—the ripe, blooming Meinie of other years—an old, a faded, and a sad-eyed woman now; and poor Ewen's lonely heart swelled within him, as he thought of all that had passed since last they met, and as he spake of what they were, and what they might have been, had fate been kind, or fortune proved more true.

We have heard much about the hidden and mysterious principle of affinity, and more about the sympathy and sacredness that belong to a first and early love; well, the heart of the tough old Cameronian felt these gentle impulses, and Meinie was no stranger to them. They were married, and for fifteen

years, there was no happier couple on the banks of the Nairn. Strange to say, they died on the same day, and were interred in the ancient burying-ground of Dalcross, where now they lie, near the ruined walls of the old vicarage kirk of the Catholic times. God rest them in their humble highland graves! My father, who was the minister of Croy, acted as chief mourner, and gave the customary funeral prayer. But I am somewhat anticipating, and losing the thread of my own story in telling theirs.

In process of time the influx of French and English tourists who came to visit the country of the clans, and to view the plain of Culloden, after the publication of "Waverley" gave to all Britain, that which we name in Scotland "the tartan fever," and caused the old path which passed the cot of Ewen to become a turnpike road; a tollbar—that most obnoxious of all impositions to a Celt—was placed across the mouth of the little glen, barring the way directly to the battle-field; and of this gate the old pensioner Ewen naturally became keeper; and during the summer season, when, perhaps, a hundred carriages per day rolled through, it became a source of revenue alike to him, and to the Lord of Cawdor and the Laird of Kilravock, the road trustees. And the chief pleasure of Ewen's existence was to sit on a thatched seat by the gate, for then he felt conscious of being in office—on duty—a species of sentinel; and it smacked of the old time when the Generale was beaten in the morning, and the drums rolled tattooo at night; when he had belts to pipe-clay, and boots to blackball; when there were wigs to frizzle and queues to tie, and to be all trim and in order to meet Monseigneur le Marquis de Montcalm, or General Washington "right early in the morning;" and there by the new barrier of the glen Ewen sat the live-long day, with spectacles on nose, and the Cameronian Bible on his knee, as he spelled his way through Deuteronomy and the tribes of Judah.

Slates in due time replaced the green thatch of his little cottage; then a diminutive additional story,

with two small dormer windows, was added thereto, and the thrifty Meinie placed a paper in her window informing shepherds, the chance wayfarers, and the wandering deer-stalkers that she had a room to let; but summer passed away, the sportsman forsook the brown scorched mountains, the gay tourist ceased to come north, and the advertisement turned from white to yellow, and from yellow to flyblown green in her window; the winter snows descended on the hills, the pines stood in long and solemn ranks by the white frozen Nairn, but "the room upstairs" still remained without a tenant.

Anon the snow passed away, the river again flowed free, the flowers began to bloom; the young grass to sprout by the hedgerows, and the mavis to sing on the fauld-dykes. for spring was come again, and joyous summer soon would follow; and one night—it was the 26th of April—Ewen was exhibiting his penmanship in large text-hand by preparing the new announcement of "a room to let," when he paused, and looked up as a peal of thunder rumbled across the sky; a red gleam of lightning flashed in the darkness without, and then they heard the roar of the deep broad Nairn, as its waters, usually so sombre and so slow, swept down from the wilds of Badenoch, flooded with the melting snows of the past winter.

A dreadful storm of thunder, rain, and wind came on, and the little cottage rocked on its foundations; frequently the turf-fire upon the hearth was almost blown about the clay-floor, by the downward gusts that bellowed in the chimney. The lightning gleamed incessantly, and seemed to play about the hill of Urchany and the ruins of Caistel Fionlah; the woods groaned and creaked, and the trees seemed to shriek as their strong limbs were torn asunder by the gusts which in some places laid side by side the green sapling of last summer, and the old oak that had stood for a thousand years—that had seen Macbeth and Duncan ride from Nairn, and had outlived the wars of the Comyns and the Clanchattan.

The swollen Nairn tore down its banks, and swept

trees, rocks, and stones in wild confusion to the sea, mingling the pines of Aberarder with the old oaks of Cawdor; while the salt spray from the Moray Firth was swept seven miles inland, where it encrusted with salt the trees, the houses, and windows, and whatever it fell on as it mingled with the ceaseless rain, while deep, hoarse, and loud the incessant thunder rattled across the sky, "as if all the cannon on earth," according to Ewen, "were exchanging salvoes between Urchany and the Hill of Geddes."

Meinie grew pale, and sat with a finger on her mouth, and a startled expression in her eyes, listening to the uproar without; four children, two of whom were Ewen's, and her last addition to the clan, clung to her skirts.

Ewen had just completed the invariable prayer and chapter for the night, and was solemnly depositing his old regimental companion, with "Baxter's Saints' Rest," in a place of security, when a tremendous knock—a knock that rang above the storm—shook the door of the cottage.

"Who can this be, and in such a night?" said Meinie.

"The Lord knoweth," responded Ewen, gravely; "but he knocks both loud and late."

"Inquire before you open," urged Meinie, seizing her husband's arm, as the impatient knock was renewed with treble violence.

"Who comes there?" demanded Ewen, in a soldierly tone.

"A friend," replied a strange voice without, and in the same manner.

"What do you want?"

"Fire and smoke!" cried the other, giving the door a tremendous kick; "do you ask that in such a devil of a night as this? You have a room to let, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Well; open the door, or blood and 'oons I'll bite your nose off!"

Ewen hastened to undo the door; and then, all wet and dripping as if he had just been fished up from the Moray Firth, there entered a strange-looking old fellow in a red coat; he stumped vigorously on a wooden leg, and carried on his shoulders a box, which he flung down with a crash that shook the dwelling, saying,—

“There—dam you—I have made good my billet at last.”

“So it seems,” said Ewen, reclosing the door in haste to exclude the tempest, lest his house should be unroofed and torn asunder.

“Harkee, comrade, what garrison or fortress is this,” asked the visitor, “that peaceable folks are to be challenged in this fashion, and forced to give parole and countersign before they march in—eh?”

“It is my house, comrade; and so you had better keep a civil tongue in your head.”

“Civil tongue? Fire and smoke, you mangy cur! I can be as civil as my neighbours; but get me a glass of grog, for I am as wet as we were the night before Minden.”

“Where have you come from in such a storm as this?”

“Where you ’d not like to go—so never mind; but, grog, I tell you—get me some grog, and a bit of tobacco; it is long since I tasted either.”

Ewen hastened to get a large quaighful of stiff Glenlivet, which the veteran drained to his health, and that of Meinie; but first he gave them a most diabolical grin, and threw into the liquor some black stuff, saying,—

“I always mix my grog with gunpowder—it’s a good tonic; I learned that of a comrade who fell at Minden on the glorious 1st of August, ’59.

“You have been a soldier, then?”

“Right! I was one of the 25th, or old Edinburgh Regiment; they enlisted me, though an Englishman, I believe; for my good old dam was a follower of the camp.”

“Our number was the 26th—the old Cameronian

Regiment—so we were near each other, you see, comrade.”

“Nearer than you would quite like, mayhap,” said Wooden-leg, with another grin and a dreadful oath.

“And you have served in Germany?” asked Ewen.

“Germany—aye, and marched over every foot of it, from Hanover to Hell, and back again. I have fought in Flanders, too.”

“I wish you had come a wee while sooner,” said Ewen gravely, for this discourse startled his sense of propriety.

“Sooner,” snarled this shocking old fellow, who must have belonged to that army “which swore so terribly in Flanders,” as good Uncle Toby says; “sooner—for what?”

“To have heard me read a chapter, and to have joined us in prayer.”

“Prayers be d—ned!” cried the other, with a shout of laughter, and a face expressive of fiendish mockery, as he gave his wooden leg a thundering blow on the floor; “fire and smoke—another glass of grog—and then we ’ll settle about my billet upstairs.”

While getting another dram, which hospitality prevented him from refusing, Ewen scrutinised this strange visitor, whose aspect and attire were very remarkable; but wholly careless of what any one thought, he sat by the hearth, wringing his wet wig, and drying it at the fire.

He was a little man, of a spare, but strong and active figure, which indicated great age; his face resembled that of a rat; behind it hung a long queue that waved about like a pendulum when he moved his head, which was quite bald, and smooth as a cricket-ball, save where a long and livid scar—evidently a sword cut—traversed it. This was visible while he sat drying his wig; but as that process was somewhat protracted, he uttered an oath, and thrust his cocked hat on one side of his head, and very much over his left eye, which was covered by a patch. This head-dress was the old military triple-

cocked hat, bound with yellow braid, and having on one side the hideous black leather cockade of the House of Hanover, now happily disused in the British army, and retained as a badge of service by liverymen alone. His attire was an old threadbare red coat, faced with yellow, having square tails and deep cuffs, with braided holes; he wore knee-breeches on his spindle shanks, one of which terminated, as I have said, in a wooden pin; he carried a large knotted stick; and, in outline and aspect, very much resembled, as Ewen thought, Frederick the Great of Prussia, or an old Chelsea pensioner, or the soldiers he had seen delineated in antique prints of the Flemish wars. His solitary orb possessed a most diabolical leer, and, whichever way you turned, it seemed to regard you with the fixed glare of a basilisk.

"You are a stranger hereabout, I presume?" said Ewen drily.

"A stranger now, certainly; but I was pretty well known in this locality once. There are some bones buried hereabout that may remember me," he replied, with a grin that showed his fangless jaws.

"Bones!" reiterated Ewen, aghast.

"Yes, bones—Culloden Muir lies close by here, does it not?"

"It does — then you have travelled this road before?"

"Death and the Devil! I should think so, comrade; on this very night sixty years ago I marched along this road, from Nairn to Culloden, with the army of His Royal Highness, the Great Duke of Cumberland, Captain-General of the British troops, in pursuit of the rebels under the Popish Pretender——"

"Under His Royal Highness Prince Charles, you mean, comrade," said Ewen, in whose breast—Cameronian though he was—a tempest of Highland wrath and loyalty swelled up at these words.

"Prince—ha! ha! ha!" laughed the other; "had

you said as much then, the gallows had been your doom. Many a man I have shot, and many a boy I have brained with the butt end of my musket, for no other crime than wearing the tartan, even as you this night wear it."

Ewen made a forward stride as if he would have taken the wicked boaster by the throat; his anger was kindled to find himself in presence of a veritable soldier of the infamous "German Butcher," whose merciless massacre of the wounded clansmen and their defenceless families will never be forgotten in Scotland while oral tradition and written record exist; but Ewen paused, and said in his quiet way,—

"Blessed be the Lord! these times and things have passed away from the land, to return to it no more. We are both old men now; by your own reckoning, you must at least have numbered four-score years, and in that, you are by twenty my better man. You are my guest to-night, moreover, so we must not quarrel, comrade. My father was killed at Culloden."

"On which side?"

"The right one—for he fell by the side of old Keppoch, and his last words were, 'Rìgh Hamish gu Bragh!'"

"Fire and smoke!" laughed the old fellow, "I remember these things as if they only happened yesterday—mix me some more grog and put it in the bill—I was the company's butcher in those days—it suited my taste—so when I was not stabbing and slashing the sheep and cattle of the rascally commissary, I was cutting the throats of the Scots and French, for there were plenty of them, and Irish too, who fought against the king's troops in Flanders. We had hot work, that day at Culloden—hotter than at Minden, where we fought in heavy marching order, with our blankets, kettles, and provisions, on a broiling noon, when the battle-field was cracking under a blazing sun, and the whole country was sweltering like the oven of the Great Baker."

"Who is he?"

"What! you don't know him? Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! come, that is good."

Ewen expostulated with the boisterous old fellow on this style of conversation, which, as you may easily conceive, was very revolting to the prejudices of a well-regulated Cameronian soldier.

"Come, come, you old devilskin," cried the other, stirring up the fire with his wooden leg, till the sparks flashed and gleamed like his solitary eye; "you may as well sing psalms to a dead horse, as preach to me. Hark how the thunder roars, like the great guns at Carthage! More grog—put it in the bill—or, halt, d—me! pay yourself," and he dashed on the table a handful of silver of the reigns of George II., and the Glencoe assassin, William of Orange.

He obtained more whiskey, and drank it raw, seasoning it from time to time with gunpowder, just as an Arab does his cold water with ginger.

"Where did you lose your eye, comrade?"

"At Culloden; but I found the fellow who pinked me, next day, as he lay bleeding on the field; he was a Cameron, in a green velvet jacket, all covered with silver; so I stripped off his lace, as I had seen my mother do, and then I brained him with the butt-end of brown-bess—and before his wife's eyes, too! What the deuce do you growl at, comrade? Such things will happen in war, and you know that orders must be obeyed. My eye was gone—but it was the left one, and I was saved the trouble of closing it when taking aim. This slash on the scone I got at the battle of Preston Pans, from the Celt who slew Colonel Gardiner."

"That Celt was my father—the Miller of Inverna-hyle," said Meinie, proudly.

"Your father! fire and smoke! do you say so? His hand was a heavy one!" cried Wooden-leg, while his eye glowed like the orb of a hyæna.

"And your leg?"

"I lost at Minden, in Kingsley's Brigade, comrade; aye, my leg—d—n!—that was indeed a loss."

"A warning to repentance, I would say."

"Then you would say wrong. Ugh! I remember when the shot—a twelve-pounder—took me just as we were rushing with charged bayonets on the French cannoniers. Smash! my leg was gone, and I lay sprawling and bleeding in a ploughed field near the Weser, while my comrades swept over me with a wild hurrah! the colours waving, and drums beating a charge."

"And what did you do?"

"I lay there and swore, believe me."

"That would not restore your limb again."

"No; but a few hearty oaths relieve the mind; and the mind relieves the body; you understand me, comrade; so there I lay all night under a storm of rain like this, bleeding and sinking; afraid of the knives of the plundering death-hunters, for my mother had been one, and I remembered well how she looked after the wounded, and cured them of their agony."

"Was your mother one of those infer—" began MacEwen.

"Don't call her hard names now, comrade; she died on the day after the defeat at Val; with the Provost Marshal's cord round her neck—a cordon less ornamental than that of St. Louis."

"And your father?"

"Was one of Howard's Regiment; but which the devil only knows, for it was a point on which the old lady, honest woman, had serious doubts herself."

"After the loss of your leg, of course you left the service?"

"No, I became the company's butcher; but, fire and smoke, get me another glass of grog; take a share yourself, and don't sit staring at me like a Dutch Souterkin conceived of a winter night over a 'pot de feu,' as all the world knows King William was. Dam! let us be merry together—ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho! and I'll sing you a song of the old whig times."

“O, brother Sandie, hear ye the news,
Lillibulero, bullen a la!
An army is coming sans breeches and shoes,
Lillibulero, bullen a la!

“To arms! to arms! brave boys to arms!
A true British cause for your courage doth ca’;
Country and city against a kilted banditti,
Lillibulero, bullen a la!”

And while he continued to rant and sing the song (once so obnoxious to the Scottish Cavaliers), he beat time with his wooden leg, and endeavoured to outroar the stormy wind and the hiss of the drenching rain. Even MacEwen, though he was an old soldier, felt some uneasiness, and Meinie trembled in her heart, while the children clung to her skirts and hid their little faces, as if this singing, riot, and jollity were impious at such a time, when the awful thunder was ringing its solemn peals across the midnight sky.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PHANTOM REGIMENT.—THE UNCO’ GUEST.

ALTHOUGH this strange old man baffled or parried every inquiry of Ewen as to whence he had come, and how and why he wore that antiquated uniform, on his making a lucrative offer to take the upper room of the little toll-house for a year—exactly a year—when Ewen thought of his poor pension of sixpence per diem, of their numerous family, and Meinie now becoming old and requiring many little comforts, all scruples were overcome by the pressure of necessity, and the mysterious old soldier was duly installed in the attic, with his corded chest, scratch-wig, and wooden-leg; moreover, he paid the first six months’ rent in advance, dashing the money—which was all coin of the first and second Georges, on the table with a bang and an oath, swearing that he disliked being indebted to any man.

The next morning was calm and serene; the green hills lifted their heads into the blue and placid sky. There was no mist on the mountains, nor rain in the valley. The flood in the Nairn had subsided, though its waters were still muddy and perturbed; but save this, and the broken branches that strewed the wayside—with an uprooted tree, or a paling laid flat on the ground, there was no trace of yesterday's hurricane, and Ewen heard Wooden-leg (he had no other name for his new lodger) stumping about overhead, as the old fellow left his bed betimes, and after trimming his queue and wig, pipeclaying his yellow facings, and beating them well with the brush, in a soldier-like way, he descended to breakfast, but, disdaining porridge and milk, broiled salmon and bannocks of barley-meal, he called for a can of stiff grog, mixed it with powder from his wide waistcoat pocket, and drank it off at a draught. Then he imperiously desired Ewen to take his bonnet and staff, and accompany him so far as Culloden, "because," said he, "I have come a long, long way to see the old place again."

Wooden-leg seemed to gather—what was quite unnecessary to him—new life, vigour, and energy—as they traversed the road that led to the battle-field, and felt the pure breeze of the spring morning blowing on their old and wrinkled faces.

The atmosphere was charmingly clear and serene. In the distance lay the spires of Inverness, and the shining waters of the Moray Firth, studded with sails, and the ramparts of Fort George were seen jutting out at the termination of a long and green peninsula. In the foreground stood the castle of Dalcross, raising its square outline above a wood, which terminates the eastern side of the landscape. The pine-clad summit of Dun Daviot incloses the west, while on every hand between, stretched the dreary moor of Drum-mossie—the Plain of Culloden—whilome drenched in the blood of Scotland's bravest hearts.

Amid the purple heath lie two or three grass-covered mounds.

These are the graves of the dead—the graves of the loyal Highlanders, who fell on that disastrous field, and of the wounded, who were so mercilessly murdered next day by an order of Cumberland, which he pencilled on the back of a card (the Nine of Diamonds); thus they were dispatched by platoons, stabbed by bayonets, slashed by swords and spon-toons, or brained by the butt-end of musket and carbine; officers and men were to be seen emulating each other in this scene of cowardice and cold-blooded atrocity, which filled every camp and barrack in Continental Europe with scorn at the name of an English soldier.

Ewen was a Highlander, and his heart filled with such thoughts as these, when he stood by the grassy tombs where the fallen brave are buried with the hopes of the house they died for; he took off his bonnet and stood bare-headed, full of sad and silent contemplation; while his garrulous companion viewed the field with his single eye, that glowed like a hot coal, and pirouetted on his wooden pin in a very remarkable manner, as he surveyed on every side the scene of that terrible encounter, where, after enduring a long cannonade of round shot and grape, the Highland swordsmen, chief and gillie, the noble and the nameless, flung themselves with reckless valour on the ranks of those whom they had already routed in two pitched battles.

“It was an awful day,” said Ewen, in a low voice, but with a gleam in his grey Celtic eye; “yonder my father fell wounded; the bullet went through his shield and pierced him here, just above the belt; he was living next day, when my mother—a poor wailing woman with a babe at her breast—found him; but an officer of Barrel’s Regiment ran a sword twice through his body and killed him; for the orders of the German Duke were, ‘that no quarter should be given.’ This spring is named MacGillivray’s Well, because here they butchered the dying chieftain who led the MacIntoshes—aye bayoneted him, next day at noon, in the arms of his bonnie young wife and his pui-

auld mother! The inhuman monsters! I have been a soldier, continued Ewen, "and I have fought for my country; but had I stood that day on this Moor of Culloden, I would have shot the German Butcher, the coward who fled from Flanders—I would, by the God who hears me, though that moment had been my last!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" rejoined his queer companion. "It seems like yesterday since I was here; I don't see many changes, except that the dead are all buried, whereas we left them to the crows, and a carriage-road has been cut across the field, just where we seized some women, who were looking among the dead for their husbands, and who——"

"Well?"

Wooden-leg whistled, and gave Ewen a diabolical leer with his snaky eye, as he resumed,—

"I see the ridge where the clans formed line—every tribe with its chief in front, and his colours in the centre, when we, hopeless of victory, and thinking only of defeat, approached them; and I can yet see standing the old stone wall which covered their right flank. Fire and smoke! it was against that wall we placed the wounded, when we fired at them by platoons next day. I finished some twenty rebels there myself."

Ewen's hand almost caught the haft of his skene-dhu, as he said, hoarsely,—

"Old man, do not call them rebels in my hearing, and least of all by the graves where they lie; they were good men and true; if they were in error, they have long since answered to God for it, even as we one day must answer; therefore let us treat their memory with respect, as soldiers should ever treat their brothers in arms who fall in war."

But Wooden-leg laughed with his strange eldritch yell, and then they returned together to the tollhouse in the glen; but Ewen felt strongly dissatisfied with his lodger, whose conversation was so calculated to shock alike his Jacobitical and his religious prejudices. Every day this sentiment grew stronger, and

he soon learned to deplore in his inmost heart having ever accepted the rent, and longed for the time when he should be rid of him; but, at the end of the six months, Wooden-leg produced the rent for the remainder of the year, still in old silver of the two first Georges, with a few Spanish dollars, and swore he would set the house on fire, if Ewen made any more apologies about their inability to make him sufficiently comfortable and so forth; for his host and hostess had resorted to every pretence and expedient to rid themselves of him handsomely.

But Wooden-leg was inexorable.

He had bargained for his billet for a year; he had paid for it; and a year he would stay, though the Lord Justice General of Scotland himself should say nay!

Boisterous and authoritative, he awed every one by his terrible gimlet eye and the volleys of oaths with which he overwhelmed them on suffering the smallest contradiction; thus he became the terror of all; and shepherds crossed the hills by the most unfrequented routes rather than pass the toll-bar, where they vowed that his eye bewitched their sheep and cattle. To every whispered and stealthy inquiry as to where his lodger had come from, and how or why he had thrust himself upon this lonely tollhouse, Ewen could only groan and shrug his shoulders, or reply,—

“He came on the night of the hurricane, like a bird of evil omen; but on the twenty-sixth of April we will be rid of him, please Heaven! It is close at hand, and he shall march then, sure as my name is Ewen Mac Ewen!”

He seemed to be troubled in his conscience, too, or to have strange visitors; for often in stormy nights he was heard swearing or threatening, and expostulating; and once or twice, when listening at the foot of the stair, Ewen heard him shouting and conversing from his window with persons on the road, although the bar was shut, locked, and there was no one visible there.

On another windy night, Ewen and his wife were scared by hearing Wooden-leg engaged in a furious altercation with some one overhead.

"Dog, I'll blow out your brains!" yelled a strange voice.

"Fire and smoke! blow out the candle first—ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho!" cried Wooden-leg; then there ensued the explosion of a pistol, a dreadful stamping of feet, with the sound of several men swearing and fighting. To all this Ewen and his wife hearkened in fear and perplexity; at last something fell heavily on the floor, and then all became still, and not a sound was heard but the night wind sighing down the glen.

Betimes in the morning Ewen, weary and unslept, left his bed and ascended to the door of this terrible lodger and tapped gently.

"Come in; why the devil this fuss and ceremony, eh, comrade?" cried a hoarse voice, and there was old Wooden-leg, not lying dead on the floor as Ewen expected, or perhaps hoped; but stumping about in his shirt sleeves, pipe-claying his facings, and whistling the "Point of War."

On being questioned about the most unearthly "row" of last night, he only bade Ewen mind his own affairs, or uttered a volley of oaths, some of which were Spanish, and mixing a can of gunpowder grog drained it at a draught.

He was very quarrelsome, dictatorial, and scandalously irreligious; thus his military reminiscences were of so ferocious and blood-thirsty a nature, that they were sufficient to scare any quiet man out of his seven senses. But it was more particularly in relating the butcheries, murders, and ravages of Cumberland in the highlands, that he exulted, and there was always a terrible air of probability in all he said. On Ewen once asking of him if he had ever been punished for the many irregularities and cruelties he so freely acknowledged having committed,—

"Punished? Fire and smoke, comrade, I should think so; I have been flogged till the bones of my

back stood through the quivering flesh ; I have been picquetted, tied neck and heels, or sent to ride the wooden horse, and to endure other punishments which are now abolished in the king's service. An officer once tied me neck and heels for eight and forty hours—ay, damme, till I lost my senses ; but he lost his life soon after, a shot from the rear killed him ; you understand me, comrade : ha, ha, ha ! ho, ho, ho ! a shot from the rear.”

“ You murdered him ? ” said Ewen, in a tone of horror.

“ I did not say so,” cried Wooden-leg with an oath, as he dealt his landlord a thwack across the shins with his stump ; “ but I'll tell you how it happened. I was on the Carthagena expedition in '41, and served amid all the horrors of that bombardment, which was rendered unsuccessful by the quarrels of the general and admiral ; then the yellow fever broke out among the troops, who were crammed on board the ships of war like figs in a cask, or like the cargo of a slaver, so they died in scores—and in scores their putrid corpses lay round the hawsers of the shipping, which raked them up every day as they swung round with the tide ; and from all the open gunports, where their hammocks were hung, our sick men saw the ground sharks gorging themselves on the dead, while they daily expected to follow. The air was black with flies, and the scorching sun seemed to have leagued with the infernal Spaniards against us. But, fire and smoke, mix me some more grog, I am forgetting my story !

“ Our Grenadiers, with those of other regiments, under Colonel James Grant of Carron, were landed on the Island of Tírrabomba, which lies at the entrance of the harbour of Carthagena, where we stormed two small forts which our ships had cannonaded on the previous day.

“ Grenadiers—open your pouches—handle grenades—blow your fuses ! ” cried Grant, “ forward.”

“ And then we bayoneted the dons, or with the clubbed musket smashed their heads like ripe pump-

kins, while our fleet, anchored with broadsides to the shore, threw shot and shell, grape, cannister, carcasses, and hand-grenades in showers among the batteries, booms, cables, chains, ships of war, gun-boats, and the devil only knows what more

“It was evening when we landed, and as the ramparts of San Luiz de Bocca Chica were within musket shot of our left flank, the lieutenant of our company was left with twelve grenadiers (of whom I was one) as a species of out-picquet to watch the Spaniards there, and to acquaint the officer in the captured forts if anything was essayed by way of sortie.

“About midnight I was posted as an advanced sentinel, and ordered to face La Bocca Chica with all my ears and eyes open. The night was close and sultry; there was not a breath of wind stirring on the land or waveless sea; and all was still save the cries of the wild animals that preyed upon the unburied dead, or the sullen splash caused by some half-shrouded corpse, as it was launched from a gun-port, for our ships were moored within pistol-shot of the place where I stood.

“Towards the west the sky was a deep and lurid red, as if the midnight sea was in flames at the horizon; and between me and this fiery glow, I could see the black and opaque outline of the masts, the yards, and the gigantic hulls of those floating charnel-houses our line-of-battle ships, and the dark solid ramparts of San Luiz de Bocca Chica.

“Suddenly I saw before me the head of a Spanish column!”

“I cocked my musket, they seemed to be halted in close order, for I could see the white coats and black hats of a single company only. So I fired at them point blank, and fell back on the picquet, which stood to arms.

“The lieutenant of our grenadiers came hurrying towards me.

“Where are the dons?” said he.

“In our front, sir,” said I, pointing to the white line which seemed to waver before us in the gloom

under the walls of San Luiz, and then it disappeared.

"They are advancing," said I.

"They have vanished, fellow," said the lieutenant, angrily.

"Because they have marched down into a hollow."

"In a moment after they re-appeared, upon which the lieutenant brought up the picquet, and after firing three volleys retired towards the principal fort where Colonel Grant had all the troops under arms; but not a Spaniard approached us, and what, think you, deceived me and caused this alarm? Only a grove of trees, fire and smoke! yes, it was a grove of manchineel trees, which the Spaniards had cut down or burned to within five feet of the ground; and as their bark is white it resembled the Spanish uniform, while the black burned tops easily passed for their grenadier caps to the overstrained eyes of a poor anxious lad, who found himself under the heavy responsibility of an advanced sentinel for the first time in his life."

"And was this the end of it?" asked Ewen.

"Hell and Tommy?" roared the Wooden-leg, "no—but you shall hear. I was batooned by the lieutenant; then I was tried at the drumhead for causing a false alarm, and sentenced to be tied neck and heels, and lest you may not know the fashion of this punishment I shall tell you of it. I was placed on the ground; my firelock was put under my hams, and another was placed over my neck; then the two were drawn close together by two cartouch-box straps; and in this situation, doubled up as round as a ball, I remained with my chin wedged between my knees until the blood spouted out of my mouth, nose, and ears, and I became insensible. When I recovered my senses the troops were forming in column, preparatory to assaulting Fort San Lazare; and though almost blind, and both weak and trembling, I was forced to take my place in the ranks; and I ground my teeth as I handled my musket and saw the lieutenant of our company, in lace-ruffles and powdered wig, prepare to join the forlorn hope,

which was composed of six hundred chosen grenadiers, under Colonel Grant, a brave Scottish officer. I loaded my piece with a charmed bullet, cast in a mould given to me by an Indian warrior, and marched on with my section. The assault failed. Of the forlorn-hope I alone escaped, for Grant and his Grenadiers perished to a man in the breach. There, too, lay our lieutenant. A shot had pierced his head behind, just at the queue. Queer, was it not? when I was his covering file?"

As he said this, Wooden-leg gave Ewen another of those diabolical leers, which always made his blood run cold, and continued,—

"I passed him as he lay dead, with his sword in his hand, his fine ruffled shirt and silk waistcoat drenched with blood—by the bye, there was a pretty girl's miniature, with powdered hair peeping out of it too. 'Ho, ho!' thought I, as I gave him a hearty kick; 'you will never again have me tied neck-and-heels for not wearing spectacles on sentry, or get me a hundred lashes, for not having my queue dressed straight to the seam of my coat.'"

"Horrible!" said Ewen.

"I will wager my wooden leg against your two of flesh and bone, that your officer would have been served in the same way, if he had given you the same provocation."

"Heaven forbid!" said Ewen.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" cried Wooden-leg.

"You spoke of an Indian warrior," said Ewen, uneasily, as the atrocious anecdotes of this hideous old man excited his anger and repugnance; "then you have served, like myself, in the New World?"

"Fire and smoke! I should think so; but long before your day."

"Then you fought against the Cherokees?"

"Yes."

"At Warwomans Creek?"

"Yes; I was killed there."

"You were—what?" stammered Ewen.

"Killed there."

"Killed?"

"Yes, scalped by the Cherokees; dam! don't I speak plain enough?"

"He is mad," thought Ewen.

"I am not mad," said Wooden-leg gruffly.

"I never said so," urged Ewen.

"Thunder and blazes! but you thought it, which is all the same."

Ewen was petrified by this remark, and then Wooden-leg, while fixing his hyæna-like eye upon him, and mixing a fresh can of his peculiar grog, continued thus,—

"Yes, I served in the Warwomans Creek expedition in '60. In the preceding year I had been taken prisoner at Fort Ninety-six, and was carried off by the Indians. They took me into the heart of their own country, where an old Sachem protected me, and adopted me in place of a son he had lost in battle. Now this old devil of a Sachem had a daughter—a graceful, pretty and gentle Indian girl, whom her tribe named the Queen of the Beaver dams. She was kind to me, and loved to call me her pale-faced brother. Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Fire and smoke! do I now look like a man that could once attract a pretty girl's eye,—now, with my wooden-leg, patched face and riddled carcass? Well, she loved me, and I pretended to be in love too, though I did not care for her the value of an old snapper. She was graceful and round in every limb, as a beautiful statue. Her features were almost regular—her eyes black and soft; her hair hung nearly to her knees, while her smooth glossy skin, was no darker than a Spanish brunette's. Her words were like notes of music, for the language of the Cherokees, like that of the Iroquois, is full of the softest vowels. This Indian girl treated me with love and kindness, and I promised to become a Cherokee warrior, a thundering turtle and scalp-hunter for her sake—just as I would have promised anything to any other woman, and had done so a score of times before. I studied her gentle character in all its weak and

delicate points, as a general views a fortress he is about to besiege, and I soon knew every avenue to the heart of the place. I made my approaches with modesty, for the mind of the Indian virgin was timid, and as pure as the new fallen snow. I drew my parallels and pushed on the trenches whenever the old Sachem was absent, smoking his pipe and drinking fire-water at the council of the tribe; I soon reached the base of the glacis and stormed the breast-works—dam! I did, comrade.

“I promised her everything, if she would continue to love me, and swore by the Great Spirit to lay at her feet the scalp-lock of the white chief, General the Lord Amherst, K.C.B., and all that, with every other protestation that occurred to me at the time; and so she soon loved me—and me alone—as we wandered on the green slopes of Tennessee, when the flowering forest-trees and the magniolas, the crimson strawberries, and the flaming azalea made the scenery beautiful; and where the shrill cry of the hawk, and the carol of the merry mocking-bird, filled the air with sounds of life and happiness.

“We were married in the fantastic fashion of the tribe, and the Indian girl was the happiest squaw in the Beaver dams. I hoed cotton and planted rice; I cut rushes that she might plait mats and baskets; I helped her to weave wampum, and built her a wigwam, but I longed to be gone, for in six months I was wearied of her and the Cherokees too. In short, one night, I knocked the old Sachem on the head, and without perceiving that he still breathed, pocketted his valuables, such as they were, two necklaces of amber beads and two of Spanish dollars, and without informing my squaw of what I had done, I prevailed upon her to guide me far into the forest, on the skirts of which lay a British outpost, near the lower end of the vale, through which flows the Tennessee River. She was unable to accompany me more than a few miles, for she was weak, weary, and soon to become a mother; so I gave her the slip in the forest, and, leaving her to shift for herself, reached head-quarters,

just as the celebrated expedition from South Carolina was preparing to march against the Cherokees.

"Knowing well the localities, I offered myself as a guide, and was at once accepted——"

"Cruel and infamous!" exclaimed honest Ewen, whose chivalric Highland spirit fired with indignation at these heartless avowals; "and the poor girl you deceived——"

"Bah! I thought the wild beasts would soon dispose of her."

"But then the infamy of being a guide, even for your comrades, against those who had fed and fostered, loved and protected you! By my soul, this atrocity were worthy of King William and his Glencoe assassins!"

"Ho, ho, ho! fire and smoke! you shall hear.

"Well, we marched from New York in the early part of 1760. There were our regiment, with four hundred of the Scots Royals, and Montgomery's Highlanders. We landed at Charleston, and marched up the country to Fort Ninety-six on the frontier of the Cherokees. Our route was long and arduous, for the ways were wild and rough, so it was the first of June before we reached Twelve-mile River. I had been so long unaccustomed to carry my knapsack, that its weight rendered me savage and ferocious, and I cursed the service and my own existence; for in addition to our muskets and accoutrements, our sixty rounds of ball cartridge per man, we carried our own tents, poles, pegs, and cooking utensils. Thunder and blazes! when we halted, which we did in a pleasant valley, where the great shady chestnuts and the flowering hickory made our camp alike cool and beautiful, my back and shoulders were nearly skinned; for as you must know well, comrade, the knapsack straps are passed so tightly under the armpits, that they stop the circulation of the blood, and press upon the lungs almost to suffocation. Scores of our men left the ranks on the march, threw themselves down in despair, and were soon tomahawked and scalped by the Indians.

“We marched forward next day, but without perceiving the smallest vestige of an Indian trail; thus we began to surmise that the Cherokees knew not that we were among them; but just as the sun was sinking behind the blue hills, we came upon a cluster of wigwams, which I knew well; they were the Beaver dams, situated on a river, among wild woods that never before had echoed to the drum or bugle.

“Bad and wicked as I was, some strange emotions rose within me at this moment. I thought of the Sachem’s daughter—her beauty—her love for me, and the child that was under her bosom when I abandoned her in the vast forest through which we had just penetrated; but I stifled all regret, and heard with pleasure the order to ‘examine flints and priming.’

“Then the Cherokee warwhoop pierced the echoing sky; a scattered fire was poured upon us from behind the rocks and trees; the sharp steel tomahawks came flashing and whirling through the air; bullets and arrows whistled, and rifles rung, and in a moment we found ourselves surrounded by a living sea of dark-skinned and yelling Cherokees, with plumes on their scalp locks, their fierce visages streaked with war paint, and all their moccasins rattling.

“Fire and fury, such a time it was!

“We all fought like devils, but our men fell fast on every side; the Royals lost two lieutenants, and several soldiers whose scalps were torn from their bleeding skulls in a moment. Our regiment, though steady under fire as a battalion of stone statues, now fell into disorder, and the brown warriors, like fiends in aspect and activity, pressed on with musket and war-club brandished, and with such yells as never rang in mortal ears elsewhere. The day was lost, until the Highlanders came up, and then the savages were routed in an instant, and cut to pieces. ‘Shoot and slash’ was the order; and there ensued such a scene of carnage as I had not witnessed since Culloden, where His Royal Highness, the fat Duke of Cumberland,

galloped about the field, overseeing the wholesale butchery of the wounded.

"We destroyed their magazines of powder and provisions; we laid the wigwams in ashes, and shot or bayoneted every living thing, from the babe on its mother's breast, to the hen that sat on the roost; for as I had made our commander aware of all the avenues, there was no escape for the poor devils of Cherokees. Had the pious, glorious, and immortal King William been there, he would have thought we had modelled the whole affair after his own exploit at Glencoe.

"All was nearly over, and among the ashes of the smoking wigwams and the gashed corpses of king's soldiers and Indian warriors, I sat down beneath a great chestnut to wipe my musket, for butt, barrel, and bayonet were clotted with blood and human hair—ouf, man, why do you shudder? it was only Cherokee wool;—all was nearly over, I have said, when a low fierce cry, like the hoarse hiss of a serpent, rang in my ear; a brown and bony hand clutched my throat as the fangs of a wolf would have done, and hurled me to the earth! A tomahawk flashed above me, and an aged Indian's face, whose expression, was like that of a fiend, came close to mine, and I felt his breath upon my cheek. It was the visage of the sachem, but hollow with suffering and almost green with fury, and he laughed like a hyæna, as he poised the uplifted axe.

"Another form intervened for a moment; it was that of the poor Indian girl I had so heartlessly deceived; she sought to stay the avenging hand of the frantic sachem; but he thrust her furiously aside, and in the next moment the glittering tomahawk was quivering in my brain—a knife swept round my head—my scalp was torn off, and I remember no more."

"A fortunate thing for you," said Ewen, drily; "memory such as yours were worse than a knapsack to carry; and so you were killed there?"

"Don't sneer, comrade," said Wooden-leg, with a diabolical gleam in his eye; "prithee, don't sneer;

I was killed there, and, moreover, buried too, by the Scots Royals, when they interred the dead next day."

"Then how came you to be here?" said Ewen, not very much at ease, to find himself in company with one he deemed a lunatic.

"Here? that is my business—not yours," was the surly rejoinder.

Ewen was silent, but reckoned over that now there were but thirty days to run until the 26th of April, when the stipulated year would expire.

"Yes, comrade, just thirty days," said Wooden-leg, with an affirmative nod, divining the thoughts of Ewen; "and then I shall be off, bag and baggage, if my friends come."

"If not?"

"Then I shall remain where I am."

"The Lord forbid!" thought Ewen; "but I can apply to the sheriff."

"Death and fury! Thunder and blazes! I should like to see the rascal of a sheriff who would dare to meddle with me!" growled the old fellow, as his one eye shot fire, and, limping away, he ascended the stairs grumbling and swearing, leaving poor Ewen terrified even to think, on finding that his thoughts, although only half conceived, were at once divined and responded to by this strange inmate of his house.

"His friends," thought Ewen, "who may they be?"

Three heavy knocks rang on the floor overhead, as a reply.

It was the wooden leg of the Cherokee invader

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PHANTOM REGIMENT—THE MIDNIGHT MARCH.

THIS queer old fellow (continued the quartermaster) was always in a state of great excitement, and used an extra number of oaths, and mixed his grog more thickly with gunpowder, when a stray

red coat appeared far down the long green glen, which was crossed by Ewen's lonely toll-bar. Then he would get into a prodigious fuss and bustle, and was wont to pack and cord his trunk, to brush up his well-worn and antique regimentals, and to adjust his queue and the black cockade of his triple-cornered hat, as if preparing to depart.

As the time of that person's wished-for departure drew nigh, Ewen took courage, and shaking off the timidity with which the swearing and boisterous fury of Wooden-leg had impressed him, he ventured to expostulate a little on the folly and sin of his unmeaning oaths, and the atrocity of the crimes he boasted of having committed.

But the wicked old Wooden-leg laughed and swore more than ever, saying that a "true soldier was never a religious one."

"You are wrong, comrade," retorted the old Cameronian, taking fire at such an assertion; "religion is the lightest burden a poor soldier can carry; and, moreover, it hath upheld me on many a long day's march, when almost sinking under hunger and fatigue, with my pack, kettle, and sixty rounds of ball ammunition on my back. The duties of a good and brave soldier are no way incompatible with those of a Christian man; and I never lay down to rest on the wet bivouac or bloody field, with my knapsack, or it might be a dead comrade, for a pillow, without thanking God——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"— The God of Scotland's covenanted Kirk for the mercies he vouchsafed to Ewen Mac Ewen, a poor grenadier of the 26th Regiment."

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The old Cameronian took off his bonnet and lifted up his eyes, as he spoke fervently, and with the simple reverence of the olden time; but Wooden-leg grinned and chuckled and gnashed his teeth as Ewen resumed.

"A brave soldier may rush to the cannon's mouth, though it be loaded with grape and cannister; or at

a line of levelled bayonets—and rush fearlessly too—and yet he may tremble, without shame, at the thought of hell, or of offended Heaven. Is it not so, comrade? I shall never forget the words of our chaplain before we stormed the Isles of Saba and St. Martin from the Dutch, with Admiral Rodney, in '81."

"Bah—that was after I was killed by the Cherokees. Well?"

"The Cameronians were formed in line, mid leg in the salt water, with bayonets fixed, the colours flying, the pipes playing and drums beating 'Britons strike home,' and our chaplain, a reverend minister of God's word, stood beside the colonel with the shot and shell from the Dutch batteries flying about his old white head, but he was cool and calm, for he was the grandson of Richard Cameron, the glorious martyr of Airdsmoss.

"'Fear not, my bairns,' cried he (he aye called us his bairns, having ministered unto us for fifty years and more)—'fear not; but remember that the eyes of the Lord are on every righteous soldier, and that His hand will shield him in the day of battle!'

"'Forward, my lads,' cried the colonel, waving his broad sword, while the musket shot shaved the curls of his old brigadier wig; 'forward, and at them with your bayonets;' and bravely we fell on—eight hundred Scotsmen, shoulder to shoulder—and in half an hour the British flag was waving over the Dutchman's Jack on the ramparts of St. Martin."

But to all Ewen's exordiums, the Wooden-leg replied by oaths, or mockery, or his incessant laugh,—

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

At last came the long-wished for twenty-sixth of April!

The day was dark and louring. The pine woods looked black, and the slopes of the distant hills seemed close and near, and yet gloomy withal. The sky was veiled by masses of hurrying clouds, which seemed to chase each other across the Moray Firth. That estuary was flecked with foam, and the ships were riding close under the lee of the Highland

shore, with topmasts struck, their boats secured, and both anchors out, for everything betokened a coming storm.

And with night it came in all its fury;—a storm similar to that of the preceding year.

The fierce and howling wind swept through the mountain gorges, and levelled the lonely shielings, whirling their fragile roofs into the air, and uprooting strong pines and sturdy beeches; the water was swept up from the Loch of the Clans, and mingled with the rain which drenched the woods around it. The green and yellow lightning played in ghastly gleams about the black summit of Dun Daviot, and again the rolling thunder bellowed over the graves of the dead on the bleak, dark moor of Culloden. Attracted by the light in the windows of the toll house, the red deer came down from the hills in herds and cowered near the little dwelling; while the cries of the affrighted partridges, blackcocks, and even those of the gannets from the Moray Firth were heard at times, as they were swept past, with branches, leaves, and stones, on the skirts of the hurrying blast.

“It is just such a storm as we had this night twelvemonths ago,” said Meinie, whose cheek grew pale at the elemental uproar.

“There will be no one coming up the glen to-night,” replied Ewen; “so I may as well secure the toll-bar, lest a gust should dash it to pieces.”

It required no little skill or strength to achieve this in such a tempest; the gate was strong and heavy, but it was fastened at last, and Ewen retreated to his own fireside. Meanwhile, during all this frightful storm without, Wooden-leg was heard singing and carolling up-stairs, stumping about in the lulls of the tempest, and rolling, pushing, and tumbling his chest from side to side; then he descended to get a fresh can of grog—for “grog, grog, grog,” was ever his cry. His old withered face was flushed, and his excited eye shone like a baleful star. He was conscious that a great event would ensue.

Ewen felt happy in his soul that his humble home should no longer be the resting-place of this evil bird whom the last tempest had blown hither.

"So you leave us to-morrow, comrade?" said he.

"I'll march before daybreak," growled the other; " 'twas our old fashion in the days of Minden. Huske and Hawley always marched off in the dark."

"Before daybreak?"

"Fire and smoke, I have said so, and you shall see; for my friends are on the march already; but good night, for I shall have to parade betimes. They come; though far, far off as yet."

He retired with one of his diabolical leers, and Ewen and his wife ensconced themselves in the recesses of their warm box-bed; Meinie soon fell into a sound sleep, though the wind continued to howl, the rain to lash against the trembling walls of the little mansion, and the thunder to hurl peal after peal across the sky of that dark and tempestuous night.

The din of the elements and his own thoughts kept Ewen long awake; but though the gleams of electric light came frequent as ever through the little window, the glow of the "gathering peat" sank lower on the hearth of hard-beaten clay, and the dull measured tick-tack of the drowsy clock as it fell on the drum of his ear, about midnight, was sending him to sleep, by the weariness of its intense monotony, when from a dream that the fierce hawk eye of his malevolent lodger was fixed upon him, he started suddenly to full consciousness. An uproar of tongues now rose and fell upon the gusts of wind without; and he heard an authoritative voice requiring the toll-bar to be opened.

Overhead rang the stumping of the Wooden-leg, whose hoarse voice was heard bellowing in reply from the upper window.

"The Lord have a care of us!" muttered Mac Ewen, as he threw his kilt and plaid round him, thrust on his bonnet and brogues, and hastened to the door, which was almost blown in by the tempest as he opened it.

The night was as dark, and the hurricane as furious as ever; but how great was Ewen's surprise to see the advanced guard of a corps of Grenadiers, halted at the toll-bar gate, which he hastened to unlock, and the moment he did so, it was torn off its iron hooks and swept up the glen like a leaf from a book, or a lady's handkerchief; as with an unearthly howling the wind came tearing along in fitful and tremendous gusts, which made the strongest forests stoop, and dashed the struggling coasters on the rocks of the Firth—the *Æstuarium Vararis* of the olden time.

As the levin brands burst in lurid fury overhead, they seemed to strike fire from the drenched rocks, the dripping trees, and the long line of flooded roadway, that wound through the pastoral glen towards Culloden.

The advanced guard marched on in silence with arms slung; and Ewen, to prevent himself from being swept away by the wind, clung with both hands to a stone pillar of the bar gate, that he might behold the passage of this midnight regiment, which approached in firm and silent order in sections of twelve files abreast, all with muskets slung. The pioneers were in front, with their leather aprons, axes, saws, bill-hooks, and hammers; the band was at the head of the column; the drums, fifes, and colours were in the centre; the captains were at the head of their companies; the subalterns on the reverse flank, and the field-officers were all mounted on black chargers, that curvetted and pranced like shadows, without a sound.

Slowly they marched, but erect and upright, not a man of them seeming to stoop against the wind or rain, while overhead the flashes of the broad and blinding lightning were blazing like a ghastly torch, and making every musket-barrel, every belt-plate, sword-blade, and buckle, gleam as this mysterious corps filed through the barrier, with who? Wooden-leg among them!

By the incessant gleams Ewen could perceive

that they were Grenadiers, and wore the quaint old uniform of George II.'s time; the sugar-loaf-shaped cap of red cloth embroidered with worsted; the great square-tailed red coat with its heavy cuffs and close-cut collar; the stockings rolled above the knee, and enormous shoe-buckles. They carried grenado-pouches; the officers had espontoons; the sergeants shouldered heavy halberds, and the coats of the little drum-boys were covered with fantastic lace.

It was not the quaint and antique aspect of this solemn battalion that terrified Ewen, or chilled his heart; but the ghastly expression of their faces, which were pale and hollow-eyed, being, to all appearance, the visages of spectres; and they marched past like a long and wavering panorama, without a sound; for though the wind was loud, and the rain was drenching, neither could have concealed the measured tread of so many mortal feet; but there was no footfall heard on the roadway, nor the tramp of a charger's hoof; the regiment defiled past, noiseless as a wreath of smoke.

The pallor of their faces, and the stillness which accompanied their march, were out of the course of nature; and the soul of Mac Ewen died away within him; but his eyes were riveted upon the marching phantoms—if phantoms, indeed, they were—as if by fascination; and, like one in a terrible dream, he continued to gaze until the last files were past; and with them rode a fat and full-faced officer, wearing a three-cocked hat, and having a star and blue ribbon on his breast. His face was ghastly like the rest, and dreadfully distorted, as if by mental agony and remorse. Two aides-de-camps accompanied him, and he rode a wild-looking black horse, whose eyes shot fire. At the neck of the fat spectre—for a spectre he really seemed—hung a card.

It was the Nine of Diamonds!

The whole of this silent and mysterious battalion passed in line of march up the glen, with the gleams of lightning flashing about them. One bolt more brilliant than the rest brought back the sudden flash of steel.

They had fixed bayonets, and shouldered arms!

And on, and on they marched, diminishing in the darkness and the distance, those ghastly Grenadiers, towards the flat bleak moor of Culloden, with the green lightning playing about them, and gleaming on the storm-swept waste.

The Wooden-leg—Ewen's unco' guest—disappeared with them, and was never heard of more in Strathnairn.

He had come with a tempest, and gone with one. Neither was any trace ever seen or heard of those strange and silent soldiers. No regiment had left Nairn that night, and no regiment reached Inverness in the morning; so unto this day the whole affair remains a mystery, and a subject for ridicule with some, although Ewen, whose story of the midnight march of a corps in time of war—caused his examination by the authorities in the Castle of Inverness—stuck manfully to his assertions, which were further corroborated by the evidence of his wife and children. He made a solemn affidavit of the circumstances I have related before the sheriff, whose court books will be found to confirm them in every particular; if not, it is the aforesaid sheriff's fault, and not mine.

There were not a few (but these were generally old Jacobite ladies of decayed Highland families, who form the gossiping tabbies and wall-flowers of the Northern Meeting) who asserted that in their young days they had heard of such a regiment marching by night, once a year to the field of Culloden; for it is currently believed by the most learned on such subjects in the vicinity of the "Clach na Cudden," that on the anniversary of the sorrowful battle, a *certain place*, which shall be nameless, opens, and that the restless souls of the murderers of the wounded clansmen march in military array to the green graves upon the purple heath, in yearly penance; and this story was thought to receive full corroboration by the apparition of a fat lubberly spectre with the nine of diamonds chained to his neck; as it was on that card—since named the Curse of Scotland—the Duke of Cumber-

land hastily pencilled the savage order to "show no quarter to the wounded, but to slaughter all."

Such was the story of our old Highland Quarter-master.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LAST OF DON FABRIQUE.

A WEEK or two after our return from Seville to Gibraltar, Jack Slingsby received a note from a Spanish officer, who commanded a detachment of the Grenadiers of Jaen, to the effect that the famous bandit Fabrique de Urquija had been taken, and was condemned to die by the spirited Alcalde of San Roque; that his execution was to take place on the day after to-morrow, and that if we wished to behold the mode of punishing such criminals in Spain, it would afford him much pleasure if we joined his party, which was ordered to assist in guarding the scaffold.

Though neither of us were animated by a love of cruelty or taste for the morbid, we were somewhat curious to see how this romantic vagabond, who so pitilessly had meted out death to so many others, would encounter his own terrible doom, and availing ourselves of the Spanish officer's polite offer, we procured a day's leave, rode over to breakfast with him, and marched with his detachment to San Roque, a little town, which lies, as I have elsewhere said, about six miles from our garrison on the Spanish side.

As we proceeded, the Spanish capitano told us the little episode of Don Fabrique's capture.

It happened thus.

The Alcalde of San Roque was reputed to be immensely wealthy, and to have in a secret place a strong box full of yellow doubloons and rich silver duros, piled up in shining pillars to its brim, like the treasure chests which the Moors are supposed to have hidden in all the old castles and ruined atalayas in Spain, and all of which are occasionally visible to those who have the fortune of being born on Good Friday, as every Spaniard knows.

The rumour of this wealth could not fail to reach the ears of Don Fabrique, and to excite the cupidity of that enterprising gentleman; but concealing his intentions from his band, whom he intended to leave, as he proposed to himself a little trip to Paris or Peru, if he relieved the Alcalde of those cares which are inseparable from the possession of wealth, he reconnoitred the house, and found an entrance to a room wherein he secreted himself beneath a bed, which stood in an alcove off it. In this bed the portly alcalde and his buxom wife were wont to take their repose; so Don Fabrique had not been very long in this place of concealment, when the lady came in with a lamp in her hand, and placing it on the toilet table, proceeded to divest her charming person of her habiliments.

She threw the fag end of her cigar into the brassero; hung her wig upon a knob of the mirror, et cetera. She then dipped a finger into the little font of holy water which hung at the head of her bed, and stepped in, to await the coming of her worthy spouse, who was lingering over the 'Heraldo' and a glass of Valdepenas in the dining-room below.

Now as the bed had a canvas bottom like a hammock, and the lady therein was equal in size and weight to three ordinary women, Don Fabrique, with natural consternation, reflected on what he should have to endure, when the gorbellied alcalde was added to the superincumbent load of the señora.

"Demonio!" thought he, "what is to be done? I shall be suffocated before that brute the señor patron is half asleep!"

The panting robber stirred uneasily, and the stout lady above him started.

"Madre de Dios, what is that!" she whispered to herself.

There was no response; but on Fabrique stirring again, the señora fairly sprang in terror from her bed. Fabrique dared not breathe, but with one hand on his stiletto and the other on his lips, he lay still as death. The lady now obtained a glimpse of his foot,

and uttering one of those shrill cries, which most women can utter at any time, she rushed from the chamber to seek her husband; but first she took the precaution of double-locking the door.

Finding himself discovered, and aware that all was over now, Fabrique hastened to escape by his place of entrance, the window. Alas! it was now secured by a shutter crossed by iron bars on the outside, and these resisted all his efforts. There was no chimney; again he rushed to the door. It was firm—fast as a rock, and he might as well have rushed against the stone wall. He heard the clank of feet and of halberts as the hastily-summoned alguazils came into the room below; true, he had his dagger; but what would that avail him against so many? The perspiration burst over his brow and he cursed the avarice which brought him on such errand unassisted by that faithful and determined band he was about to leave for ever.

Fertile in expedients, he at last thought of one.

He threw off all his clothes and popped into the bed of the señor alcalde, and scarcely had he tucked himself cosily in when the door was burst open, and in marched the portly patron, his eyes dilated with vengeance, and his paunch swollen with official dignity and purple valdepenas, while the grim alguazils with pointed halberts and cocked trabujas came behind, and with them was the terrified lady in her night-dress, holding a candle in one trembling hand, her rosary and a case of reliques in the other.

Fabrique gazed at them with well-feigned surprise, which was reflected in the faces of all on beholding the place of his retreat, though it soon turned to resentment in the wife of the alcalde; her eyes flashed; her plump cheeks and bosom became crimson with anger.

“How now, señor raterillo,” thundered the alcalde; “what am I to understand by all this?”

“By what, most worthy señor,” whined the robber, with affected simplicity and shame.

“Why—your being here—here, señor—in the bed

of the señora—in my bed?” continued the alcalde, gathering courage from the loudness of his own voice; “speak, rascal—why are you here?”

“Ask the señora, who invited me,” replied Fabrique, with the coolest assurance in the world.

“Morte de Dios, what is this I hear?” muttered the overwhelmed alcalde.

“Yes, ask her, for I did not come here unexpected, believe me, most worthy and much-injured Señor Patron,” continued the cunning rogue as he leaped out of bed, and assisted by the tittering alguazils, put on his garments with all haste, while the wife of the poor alcalde gazed upon him speechless with rage at the inference and his accusation, while the magistrate himself was baffled and blanched by a new and vague sense of shame and consternation.

“My dear señora,” said Fabrique, in a bland tone, as he tied on his sash and assumed his sombrero, “I regret extremely that you are weary of me—that my company is no longer pleasing to you, as of old; but it is very cruel of you to bring the neck of a poor lover so faithful as I into such deadly jeopardy, and I shall treasure this lesson of female perfidy, revenge, and caprice to my latest hour. Muchas gracias, señora, much good may your trick do you.”

The lady was choking with anger and unmerited shame, while the cunning rogue continued,—

“Most worthy Señor Alcalde, most faithless and fickle señora, and you, most paltry and pitiful señores alguazils, I have the honour to wish you all a very good evening.”

With a low bow and a mocking smile, he was about to depart, when one of the alguazils exclaimed,—

“Stop—seize him; by Santiago, ’t is Fabrique de Urquija!”

The face of the robber became black with fury; he drew his stiletto and rushed upon his discoverer, but was soon beaten down by the halberts and clubbed blunderbusses of the officials, by whom he was bound with cords and dragged to prison without delay.

He was soon tried in due form, and though the

whole town rang with his terrible exploits, and the women praised his handsome figure, his reckless courage, and the great tact and skill by which he had so nearly eluded the pot-bellied Alcalde, he was sentenced "to be garotted at twelve o'clock to-day."

Such was the detail given to us by the Spanish officer.

As we neared San Roque, we found great crowds from remote parts of the judicial partido, all clad in the picturesque and antique costumes of the province, ascending the mountain on which the town is situated, and all anxious to behold the dying demeanour of the most famous of Spanish bandits—the greatest since Manuel Francisco was shot at Cordova two years ago.

The mountain of San Roque stands at the head of a beautiful bay of the same name; and on looking back as we ascended, we had a charming view of the sea, with several large Xebecques floating like gigantic white birds with wings outspread upon its shining azure surface.

A clear and brilliant morning sun poured a flood of light athwart the picturesque plaza of San Roque, into which, as one may easily imagine, the whole male population of the town—about eight thousand—were crowded. This plaza resembled a sea of human heads covered with black or brown sombreros; though there were many who wore only their own coarse black hair in netted cauls, and a few had scarlet forage caps. Above this crowd glittered the bayonets and the glazed shakoes of a battalion of Infantry of the Spanish line, from the adjacent barracks. These surrounded the high wooden platform of the garotte. Within their line were the poor old ecclesiastics of the two suppressed convents and three hospitals of San Roque, wearing the remarkable monastic costumes of a past age.

The principal place was occupied by the commandant of the fortified camp of San Roque, who, upon our appearing among the crowd in our British uniform, sent his aide-de-camp, with a polite invitation for us to join his staff, which we immediately accepted.

On the centre of the platform, which was about twenty feet square, and covered with black cloth, sat the fallen Fabrique de Urquija upon a little wooden stool, with his back placed against the upright post of the garotte, the iron collar of which encircled his brawny naked neck. His broad low brow was black as a thunder cloud; his eyes were fierce and keen, and with a lowering glance of scornful pride, he surveyed the masses who crowded on every inch of space that afforded footing. His ancles were chained to an eyebolt on the floor of the platform. Near him stood the old confessor Jose de Torquemada of Medina, barefooted; his cowl thrown back; in his wrinkled hands an ivory crucifix, which ever and anon he placed to the quivering lips of the doomed man in the interval of prayer.

Poor Urquija! I forgot all his atrocities and the evil he would once have done to Slingsby and myself; and now I felt only pity for his terrible situation.

"I saw your glance of commiseration," said Jack quietly, as he prepared a cigarito; "but be assured, Ramble, you may as well feel pity for a bruised wolf. I have not forgotten the Rio de Muerte, and that night on the hills above Trohniona."

"Noble Caballeros—buenos Christianos," said a venerable Franciscan, placing before us the wooden platter on which he was receiving the reals and pence of the faithful; "por neustra Señora Santissima, one little medio for the sinful soul of Fabrique de Urquija."

Jack and I—though believing but little in monk or mass—were taught as soldiers to respect the religious prejudices of all men; thus we were touched by the honest piety of these old pillars of a dying creed—dying at least in Spain; and we each threw in a gold coin. This raised an approving murmur among the people, and the prisoner gave us a glance full of recognition and gratitude. We had paid enough for fifty masses!

The church bell now began to toll a passing knell.

Then the alguazils, who wore the cavalier costume

of other times—the broad hat, the long locks, the white vandyke collar over a little shoulder mantle, the short knee-breeches and buckled shoes, of the days of Cervantes, advanced their halberts and ascended the scaffold, accompanied by the executioner, who was dressed in the deepest black. All present now murmured and looked round, and several officers drew their swords, for rumours of a projected rescue were current in San Roque and its vicinity.

The confession was ended, and if all the horrors which rumour ascribed to the unhappy Urquija were true, what a revelation it must have been! What a volume it would have made!

Jose Torquemada remained on his knees beside the penitent, who turned to him ever and anon, anxiously and hurriedly to pour into his ear some newly-remembered act of guilt, or perhaps to spin out the thread of life a little—a very little longer.

Meanwhile the solemn bell continued tolling; the people around the scaffold were nearly all upon their knees, and the grasp of the executioner was laid upon the iron wrench or screw of the garotte. The face of the culprit flushed as he did so, and then grew pale as marble.

The hand of the church clock indicated the hour of noon; then a cannon pealed from the fortifications of San Roque and the priest pointed with his crucifix to Heaven, while the executioner, at that instant, gave the screw a vigorous twist, and the head of Urquija fell suddenly on his breast. It heaved a little, and all was over.

A “viva” mingled with the prayers of the people; but the dead man remained motionless and still, under that bright sunshine of noon; and then rose the hum of many voices as if a load had been taken off every breast; while the bayonets flashed and the sharp brass drums beat merrily, as the Spanish Infantry wheeled from hollow square into open column of companies, and marched by sections through the Plaza to the fortified camp of San Roque; then the crowd, who, up to the last moment had foretold

and expected a rescue from the band of Urquija, who were hovering and vowing vengeance on the Sierra de Ronda, began to disperse.

Such was the last act in the terrible career of Fabrique de Urquija, the student of Alcala; and such was the last episode of Jack Slingsby's Spanish adventures and mine.

We dined with the Commandant at the fortified camp of San Roque, and in the evening rode back to Gibraltar, where we found the garrison in a buzz of excitement.

"What is the matter?" I asked of a sentinel at the lower fortifications as we rode in; "and for what reason was that heavy cannon fired after sunset?"

"The Himalaya has come in, sir, with Sir Henry Slingsby and a detachment of the Guards on board; she is at anchor in the roads, and your regiment is ordered to embark for the Crimea by gunfire to-morrow."

"Hurrah!" cried Jack, and we dashed at full speed to our barracks, where the clusters of our soldiers in the square, laughing and talking gaily, the colonel's orderly running after the adjutant, the adjutant calling for the serjeant major, and the evident excitement and satisfaction visible in every face, corroborated the information of the sentinel, and impressed upon us the necessity of immediately packing our baggage; but before doing so, I dispatched at once to press these little tales and episodes which have lightened and beguiled our mess-table in old Gibraltar; and if they please my readers, and win from them but half the praise they won from my light-hearted and brave brother officers, my task in collecting them will be more than recompensed.

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